

APRIL 1915

PRICE 15 CENTS

THE  
**RED BOOK**  
MAGAZINE

THE BEST OF THEM ALL

Rupert Hughes, Peter B. Kyne  
Cyrus Townsend Brady, Edwin Balmer  
Ida M. Evans, Frank N. Westcott  
Kennett Harris, Walter Jones  
Ellis Parker Butler

The first of a new series by  
**MELVILLE DAVISSON PO**

and 7 other features  
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# APRIL RED BOOK MAGAZINE

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## PHOTOGRAPHIC ART STUDIES Beautiful Women of the Stage

### THE THREE BEST SERIALS OF 1915

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|---|------------------------------------|
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| <b>The Island of Surprise</b> -----   | <b>Cyrus Townsend Brady</b> -1158  |
| Robert Lovell's impetuosity gets him into complications with two young women. |                                    |
| <b>Hepsey Burke</b> -----   | <b>Frank N. Westcott</b> -----1208 |
| The final installment of the novel of a David Harum in petticoats.            |                                    |

### FOURTEEN PACE-SETTING SHORT STORIES

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|---|--------------------------------------|
| <b>The Straw Man</b> -----  | <b>Melville Davisson Post</b> ..1058 |
| This begins the "Uncle Abner" stories, the best mystery stories ever written.         |                                      |
| <b>The Conspiracy at the Château</b> -----  | <b>Edwin Balmer</b> -----1069        |
| Edwin Balmer sets a most romantic adventure in prosaic, everyday life.                |                                      |
| <b>What's the Matter With Our House?</b> -----  | <b>Walter Jones</b> -----1083        |
| They gave a surprise party at the home of the Stovers, in the town of Pembina.        |                                      |
| <b>A Question of Courage</b> -----  | <b>Wm. Hamilton Osborne</b> 1111     |
| What would you have done, had you been confronted with this man's problem?            |                                      |
| <b>The Kind Words Club</b> -----  | <b>Ida M. Evans</b> -----1117        |
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| <b>Betcher Boots</b> -----  | <b>Jack Hines</b> -----1128          |
| A story for lovers of animals: it tells of an Indian boy and the dog he befriended.   |                                      |
| <b>Humanizing Mr. Winsby</b> -----  | <b>Peter B. Kyne</b> -----1137       |
| The first half of the events which made a regular person from a California plutocrat. |                                      |
| <b>The Seven of Hearts</b> -----  | <b>Frank Froest</b> -----1148        |
| Another "totally different" detective story by this new RED BOOK "discovery."         |                                      |
| <b>The Man Who Knew His Business</b> -----  | <b>Kennett Harris</b> -----1171      |
| No other writer puts such humor into business life. This is one of Mr. Harris' best.  |                                      |
| <b>The Tongue Lashing</b> -----   | <b>Berthe Knattvold Mellett</b> 1182 |
| A story of the great snow country, told with wonderful thought and rare imagination.  |                                      |
| <b>Philo Gubb's Greatest Case</b> -----   | <b>Ellis Parker Butler</b> -----1191 |
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| <b>The Same Cloth</b> -----   | <b>John Barton Oxford</b> ----1202   |
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| <b>When a Man Marries</b> -----   | <b>Emily Newell Blair</b> -----1220  |
| The story of the lawyer whose wife always asked, "Do you still love me, dear?"        |                                      |
| <b>Only Human Nature</b> -----  | <b>Thomas Gray Fessenden</b> 1225    |
| The old man was "faking," but can you guess the motive which inspired him?            |                                      |

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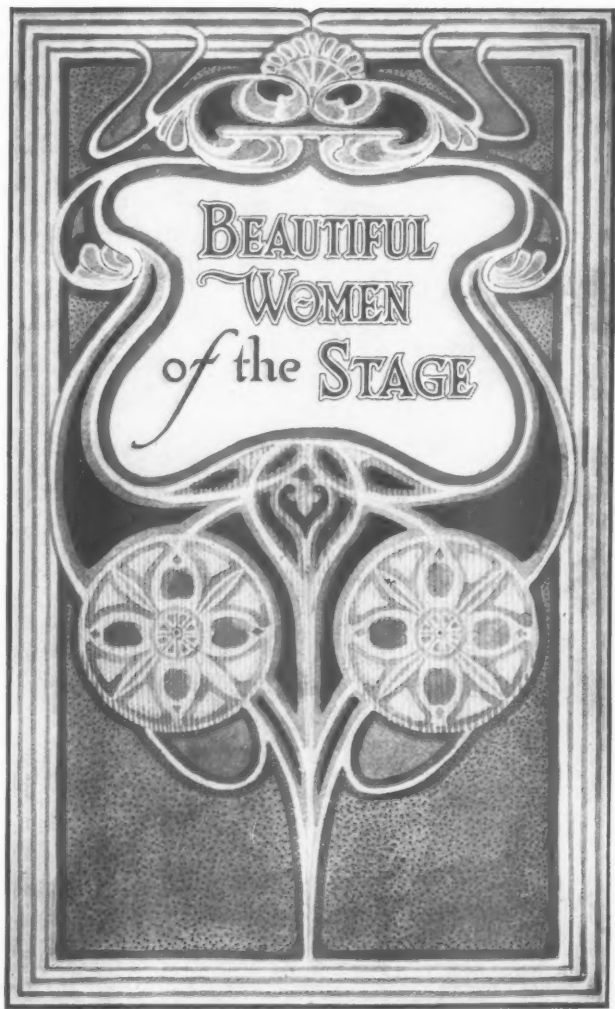


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For Easter Breakfast—

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Ham or Bacon

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A





Latest Character Pose of  
**MAUDE ADAMS**  
in "The Legend of Leonora"

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Another interesting Character Pose of  
**MAUDE ADAMS**  
in "The Legend of Leonora"

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CHRISTINE NORMAN  
in "Our Children"

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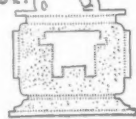
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OLIVE TELL  
in "Our Children"  
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JEAN BARNETT  
in "The Ziegfeld Follies"  
Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago



Verndale's chair overturned, as he leaped to his feet. "What the devil do you mean?" he demanded. "Are you making any suggestion against anyone present?" "I am!" said the detective sharply. "Sit down!"

—From "The Seven of Hearts," which begins on page 1148.

April  
1915

THE  
**RED BOOK**  
MAGAZINE

Vol XXIV  
No. 6

RAY LONG, Editor

**V**ARIETY is the spice of life; it is more than the spice of reading. There is nothing so dull as the magazine which carries the same sort of stories by the same old writers, month in and month out.

There is no magazine which offers the variety you get in THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE. As much thought is spent on determining the issues in which certain stories shall appear as in the selection of the stories themselves.

Consider this issue. There are stories of all sorts: mystery, romance, adventure, psychology, humor—especially humor, for we believe this is a time when people are anxious to forget their troubles—and you will not find two stories alike.

We are offering you each month the work of the best writers in the world, and we are offering it in the form which makes it most attractive. That's why

THE RED BOOK IS SETTING THE  
PACE IN THE MAGAZINE WORLD.

# THE STRAW

The first of a series of remarkable

By Melville Davisson Post

Author of "The Man of Last Resort," "The Corrector of Destinies," "The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM OBERHARDT

*WE have never offered a feature in which we took more pride than these "Uncle Abner" stories. In writing them, Mr. Post has accomplished a distinctly American departure in literature. Uncle Abner is of the landed gentry in old Virginia, in the days just before the Civil War; a man of deep religion, he believed the Providence of God always outwitted the criminal, and that a sound common sense was always the implement used. He was a sturdy, virile man, this Uncle Abner, moving in a sturdy, virile civilization—the civilization of men whose fathers fought a good half of the Revolution. The germinal incidents in all the mysteries he undertakes to solve in these Red Book Magazine stories are from actual American and Old English criminal cases.*

**I**T was a day of early June in Virginia. The afternoon sun lay warm on the courthouse with its great plaster pillars; on the tavern with its two story porch; on the stretches of green fields beyond and the low wooded hill, rimmed by the far-off mountains like a wall of the world.

It was the first day of the circuit court, which all the country attended. And on this afternoon, two men crossed the one thoroughfare that lay through the county seat, and went up the wide stone steps into the courthouse.

The two men were in striking contrast. One, short of stature and beginning to take on the rotundity of age, was dressed with elaborate care, his great black stock propping up his chin, his linen and the



These finger prints were marked in the dust on the walls of



# MAN

mystery stories



the passage on the east side, but on the west side, beginning heaviest near Duncan Moore's room, the prints were in blood.

cloth of his coat immaculate. He wore a huge carved ring and a bunch of seals attached to his watch fob. The other was a big, broad-shouldered, deep-chested Saxon, with all those marked characteristics of a race living out of doors and hardened by wind and sun. His powerful frame carried no ounce of surplus weight. It was the frame of the empire builder on the frontier of the empire. The face reminded one of Cromwell, the craggy features in repose seemed moulded over iron, but the fine gray eyes had a calm serenity, like remote spaces in the summer sky. The man's clothes were plain and somber. And he gave one the impression of things big and vast.

As the two entered between the plaster pillars, a tall old man came out from the county clerk's office. But for his face, he might have been one of a thousand Englishmen in Virginia. There was nothing in the big, spare figure or the cranial lines of the man to mark.

But the face seized you. In it was an unfathomable disgust with life, joined, one would say, with a cruel courage. The hard, bony jaw protruded; bitter lines descended along the planes of the face, and the eyes circled by red rims were expressionless and staring, as though, by some abominable negligence of nature, they were lidless.

The two approached, and the one so elaborately dressed spoke to the old man.

"How do you do, Northcote Moore?" he said. "You know Abner?"

The old man stopped instantly and stood very still. He moved the stick in his hand a trifle before him. Then he spoke in a high-pitched, irascible voice.

"Abner, eh! Well, what the devil is Abner here for?"

The little pompous man clenched his fingers in his yellow gloves, but his voice showed no annoyance.

"I asked him to have a look at Eastwood Court."

"Damn the justice of the peace of every county," cried the old man, "and you included, Randolph! You never make an end of anything."

He gave no attention to the tall, broad-shouldered Virginian, who remained unembarrassed, regarding the im-

polite old man as one regards some strange, new, and particularly offensive beast.

"Chuck the whole business, Randolph, that's what I say," the irascible old man continued, "and forget about it. Who the devil cares? A drooling old paralytic is snuffed out. Well, he ought to have gone five and twenty years ago! He couldn't manage his estate and he kept me out. I was like to hang about until I rotted, while the creature played at patience, propped up against the table and the wall. A nigger, on a search for shillings, knocks him on the head. Shall I hunt the nigger down and hang him? Damme! I would rather get him a patent of state lands!"

The face of Randolph was a study in expression.

"But, sir," he said, "there are some things about this affair that are peculiar—I may say extraordinarily peculiar."

Again the old man stood still. When he spoke his voice was in a lower note.

"And so," he said, "you have nosed out a new clue and got Abner over, and we are to have another inquisition."

He reflected, moving his stick idly before him. Then he went on in a petulant, persuasive tone.

"Why can't you let sleeping dogs lie? The country is beginning to forget this affair, and you set about to stir it up. Shall I always have the thing clanking at my heels like a ball and chain?"

Then he rang the paved court with the ferrule of his stick.

"Damme, man!" he cried. "Has Virginia no mysteries, that you yap forever on old scents at Eastwood? What does it matter who did this thing? It was a public service. Virginia needs a few men on her lands with a bit of courage. This state is rotten with old timber. In youth, Duncan Moore was a fool. In age, he was better dead. Let there be an end of this, Randolph."

And he turned about and went back into the county clerk's office.

**R**ANDOLPH was a justice of the peace in Virginia. He looked a moment after the departing figure; then he spoke to his companion.

"He is here to have the lands of Dun-

can Moore transferred on the assessor's book to his own name. He takes the estate under the Life and Lives statute of Virginia, that the legislature got up to soften the rigor of Mr. Jefferson's Statute of Descents. Under it, this estate with its great English manor house was devised by the original ancestor to Duncan Moore for his life, and after him to Northcote Moore for his life, and at his death to Esdale Moore. It could have run twenty-one years farther if the scrivener had known the statute. Mr. Jefferson did not entirely decapitate the law of entail."

He paused and lifted his finger with a curious gesture.

"It is a queer family—I think the very queerest in Virginia. There is something defective about every one of them. Duncan Moore, the decedent, had no children. His two brothers died epileptics. This man, the son of the elder brother, is blind. And the son of the junior, Mr. Esdale Moore, the attorney-at-law—"

The Justice of the Peace was interrupted. A little dapper man, sunburned and bareheaded, dressed like a tailor's print, but with the smart, aggressive air of a well-bred colonial Englishman, pushed through the crowd and clapped the Justice on the shoulder.

"What luck, Randolph?" he cried. "I am sure Abner has run the assassin to cover." And he bobbed his head to the big Virginian like one whose profession permits a certain familiarity. "Come along to the tavern; 'I would listen to your wondrous tales,' as Homer says it."

He led the way, calling out to a member of the bar, hailing an acquaintance, and hurling banter about him in the bluff, hearty fashion which he imagined to be the correct manner of a man of the people who is getting on. He was in the strength and vigor of his race at forty.

"Beastly dull, Randolph," he rattled; "nothing exciting since the dawn except old Barton-Vitch's endless suit in chancery. But one must sit tight, rain or shine. The people must know where to find a lawyer when they want him."

He swung along with a big military stride.

"The life of a jurisconsult is far from

jolly. I should like to cut it, Randolph, if I had a good shooting and bit of trout water. Alas, I am poor!" And he made a dramatic gesture.

One felt that under this froth the man was calling out the truth. For all his hearty interest in affairs, the law was merely a sort of game. It was nothing real. He played to win, and he had chosen his profession with care and after long reflection, as a breeder chooses a colt for the Derby, or as an English family of influence selects a crack regiment for the heir at Oxford. He cared not one penny what the laws were or the great policies of Virginia. But he did care, with an inbred and abiding interest, about the value of a partridge shooting, or the damming of a trout stream by the grist mills. These things were the realities of life, and not the actions at law or the suits in chancery.

"How does one get a fortune nowadays, Abner?" he called back across his shoulder, "for I need one like the devil. Marriage or crime, eh? Crime requires a certain courage, and they say out in the open that lawyers are decadent. With you and Randolph on the look-out, I should be afraid to go in for crime!"

He clapped a passing giant on the back, called him Harrison, accused him of having an eye on Congress, and went on across his shoulder to Abner:

"Marriage, then? Do you know a convenient orphan with a golden goose? Pleasure and a certain gain would be idyllic! The simplest men understand that. Do not the writers in Paris tell us that the French peasant on his marriage night, while embracing his bride with one arm, extends the other in order to feel the sack that contains her dowry?"

THEY were now on the upper floor of the tavern porch. Mr. Esdale Moore sent a negro for a dish of tea, after the English fashion.

Then he got a table at the end of the porch, somewhat apart, and the three men sat down.

"And now, Randolph," he said, "what did you find at Eastwood?"

"I am afraid," replied the Justice of the Peace, "that we found little new there. The evidence remains, with trifling

additions, what it was; but Abner has arrived at some interesting opinions upon this evidence."

"I am sure Abner can clap his hand on the assassin," said the attorney. "Come, sir, let me fill your cup, and while I stand on one foot, as St. Augustine used to say, tell me who ejected my uncle, the venerable Duncan Moore, out of life."

The negro servant had returned with a great silver pot, and a tray of cups with queer kneeling purple cows on them.

Abner held out his cup.

"Sir," he said, "one must be very certain, to answer that question." His voice was deep and level, like some balanced element in nature.

He waited while the man filled the cup; then he replaced it on the table.

"And, sir," he continued slowly, "I am not yet precisely certain."

He slipped a lump of sugar slowly into the cup.

"It is the Ruler of Events who knows, sir; we can only conjecture. We cannot see the truth naked before us as He does; we must grope for it from one indication to another until we find it."

"But, reason, Abner," interrupted the lawyer, bustling in his chair; "we have that, and God has nothing better!"

"Sir," replied the Virginian, "I cannot think of God depending on a thing so crude as reason. If one reflects upon it, I think one will immediately see that reason is a quality exclusively peculiar to the human mind. It is a thing that God could never, by any chance, require. Reason is the method by which those who do not know the truth, step by step, finally discover it."

He paused and looked out across the table at the far-off mountains.

"And so, sir, God knows who in Virginia has a red hand from this work at Eastwood Court, without assembling the evidence and laboring to determine whither these signboards point. But Randolph and I are like children with a puzzle. We must get all the pieces first, and then sit down and laboriously fit them up."

He looked down into his cup, his face in repose and reflective.

"Ah, sir," he went on, "if one could be certain that one had always every piece, there would no longer remain such a thing as a human mystery. Every event dovetails into every other event that precedes and follows. With the pieces complete, the truth could never elude us. But, alas, sir, human intelligence is feeble and easily deludes itself, and the relations and ramifications of events are vast and intricate."

"Then, sir," said Mr. Esdale Moore, "you do not believe that the criminal can create a series of false evidences that will be at all points consistent with the truth."

"No man can do it," replied the Virginian. "For to do that, one must know everything that goes before and everything that follows the event which one is attempting to falsify. And this omniscience only the intelligence of God can compass. It is impossible for the human mind to manufacture a false consistency of events except to a very limited extent."

"Then, gentlemen," cried the lawyer, "you can make me no excuse for leaving this affair a mystery."

"Yes," replied the Virginian, "we could make you an excuse—a valid and sound excuse: the excuse of incompetency."

Mr. Esdale Moore laughed in his big, hearty voice.

"With your reputation, Abner, and that of Squire Randolph in Virginia, I should refuse to receive it."

"Alas," continued the Virginian, "we are no better than other men. A certain experience, some knowledge of the habits of criminals, and a little skill in observation are the only advantages we have. If one were born among us with, let us say, a double equipment of skull space, no criminal would ever escape him."

"He would laugh at us, Abner," said the Justice.

"He would never cease to laugh," returned the Virginian, "but he would laugh the loudest at the bungling criminal. To him, the most cunning crime would be a botch; fabricated events would be conspicuous patch-work, and he would see the identity of the criminal agent in a thousand evidences."



"Chuck the whole business, Randolph, that's what I say," the irascible old man continued, "and forget about it. Who the devil cares?"

He hesitated a moment; then he added:

"Fortunately for human society, the inconsistency of false evidence is usually so glaring that any one of us is able to see it."

"As in Lord William Russell's case," said the Justice, "where the valet, having killed his master in such a manner as to create the aspect of suicide, inadvertently carried away the knife with which his victim was supposed to have cut his own throat."

"Precisely," said the Virginian. "And there is, I think, in every case something equally inconsistent, if we only look close enough to find it."

He turned to Mr. Esdale Moore.

"With a little observation, sir, to ascertain the evidence, and a little common sense to interpret its intent, Randolph and I manage to get on."

THE lawyer put a leading question.

"What glaring inconsistency did you find at Eastwood?" he said.

Abner looked at Randolph, as though for permission to go on. The Justice nodded.

"Why, this thing, sir," he answered. "that a secretary that was not locked should be broken open."

"But, Abner," said the lawyer, "who, but myself, knew that this secretary was not locked? It was the custom to lock it, although it contained nothing but my uncle's playing cards. As I told Randolph, on the day of my uncle's death I put the key down among the litter of papers inside the secretary, after I had opened it, and could not find it again, so I merely closed the lid. But I alone knew this. Everybody else would imagine the secretary to be locked as usual."

"Not everybody," continued the Virginian. "Reflect a moment: To believe the secretary locked on this night, one must have known that it was locked on every preceding night. To believe that it was locked on this night because the lid was closed, one must have known that it was always locked on every preceding night when the lid was closed. And further, sir, one must have known this custom so well—one must have been so certain of it—that one knew it was not

worth while to attempt to open the secretary by pulling down the lid on the chance that it might not be locked; and so, broke it open at once.

"Now, sir," he went on, "does this not exclude the theory that Duncan Moore was killed by a common burglar who entered the house for the purpose of committing a robbery? Such a criminal agent could not have known this custom. He might have believed the secretary to be locked, or imagined it to be; but he could not have known it conclusively. He could not have been so certain that he would fail to lay hold of the lid to make sure. One must assume the lowest criminal will act with some degree of intelligence."

"By Jove!" cried the attorney, striking the table, "I had a feeling that my uncle was not killed by a common thief! I thought the authorities were not at the bottom of this thing, and that is why I kept at Randolph, why I urged him to get you out to Eastwood Court."

"Sir," replied the Virginian, "I am obliged to you for the compliment. But your feeling was justified, and your persistence in this case will, I think, be rewarded."

"Nevertheless, sir, if you will pardon the digression, permit me to say that your remark interests me profoundly. Whence, I wonder, came this feeling that caused you to reject the obvious explanation and to urge a further and more elaborate inquiry?"

"Now, Abner," returned Mr. Esdale Moore, "I cannot answer that question. The thing was a kind of presentiment. I had a sort of feeling, as we express it. I cannot say more than that."

"I have had occasion," continued the Virginian, "to examine the theory of presentiments, and I find that we are forced to one of two conclusions: Either they are of an origin exterior to the individual, of which we have no reliable proof, or they are founded upon some knowledge of which the correlation in the mind is, for the moment, obscure. That is to say, a feeling, presentiment, or premonition, may be a sort of shadow thrown by an unformed conclusion."

"An unconscious or subconscious mental process produces an impression. We



take this impression to be from behind the stars, when, in fact, it merely indicates the rational conclusion at which we would have arrived if we had made a strong, conscious effort to understand the enigma before us."

He drank a little tea and put the cup back gently on the table.

"Perhaps, sir, if you had gone forward with the mental processes that produced your premonition, you would have worked out the solution of this mystery. Why, I wonder, did your deductions remain subconscious?"

"That is a question in mental science," replied the lawyer.

"Is not all science mental?" continued the Virginian. "Do not men take their facts in a bag to the philosopher that he may put them together? Let us reflect a moment, sir: Are not the primitive emotions,—as, for example, fear,—in their initial stages always subconscious, or, as we say, instinctive? Thus, a thousand times in the day do not our bodies draw back from danger of which we are wholly unconscious? We do not go forward into these perils, and we pass on with no realization of their existence. Can we doubt, sir, that the mind also instinctively perceives danger at the end of certain mental processes and does not go forward upon them?"

The lawyer regarded the Virginian in a sort of wonder.

"Abner," he said, "you forget my activities in this affair. It is I who have kept at Randolph. What instinctive fear, then, could have mentally restrained me?"

"Why, sir," replied Abner, "the same fear that instinctively restrained Randolph and myself."

Mr. Esdale Moore looked the Virginian in the face.

"What fear?" he said.

"The fear," continued Abner, "of what these deductions lead to."

**ABNER** moved his chair a little nearer to the table and went on in a lower voice.

"Now, sir, if we exclude the untenable hypothesis that this crime was committed by an unknown thief, from the motive of robbery, what explanation remains?"

Let us see: This secretary could have been broken open only by some one who knew that it was the custom to keep it locked. Who was certain of that custom? Obviously, sir, only those in the household of the aged Duncan Moore."

The face of the lawyer showed a profound interest. He leaned over, put his right elbow on the table, rested his chin in the trough of the thumb and finger, and with his other hand, took a box of tobacco cigarettes from his pocket and began to break it open. It was one of the elegancies of that day.

The Virginian went on, "Was it a servant at Eastwood Court?"

He paused, and Randolph interrupted.

"On the night of this tragedy," said the Justice of the Peace, "all the negroes in the household attended a servants' ball on a neighboring estate. They went in a body and returned in a body. The aged Duncan Moore was alive when they left the house, and dead when they returned."

"But, Randolph," the Virginian went on, "independent of this chance event, conclusive in itself—which I feel is an accident to which we are hardly entitled—do not our inferences legitimately indicate a criminal agent other than a servant at Eastwood Court?"

"Sane men do not commit violent crimes without a motive. There was no motive to move any servant except that of gain, and there was no gain to be derived from the death of the aged Duncan Moore, except that to be got from rifling his secretary. But the one who knew so much about this secretary that he was certain it was locked, would also have known enough about it to know that it contained nothing of value."

He hesitated and moved the handle of his cup.

• "Now, sir," he added, "two persons remain."

The lawyer, fingering the box of cigarettes, broke it open and presented them to the Virginian and Randolph. He lighted one, and over the table looked Abner in the face.

"You mean Northcote Moore and myself," he said in a firm, even voice.

"Well, sir, which one was it?"

The Virginian remained undisturbed.

"Sir," he said, "there was at least a pretense of consistency in the work of the one who manufactured the evidences of a burglar. There was a window open in the north wing at the end of the long, many-cornered passage that leads through Eastwood Court to the room in the south wing where the aged Duncan Moore was killed. Now some one had gone along that passage, as you pointed out to Randolph when Eastwood Court was first inspected, because there were finger-prints on the walls at the turns and angles. These finger-prints were marked in the dust on the walls of the passage on the east side, but on the west side, beginning heaviest near Duncan Moore's room, the prints were in blood.

"These marks on the wall show that the assassin did, in fact, enter by this passage and return along it. But he did not enter by the open window. The frame of this window was cemented into the casement with dust. This dust was re-

passed, since you lived in the house, and used it constantly."

The Virginian paused and looked at Mr. Esdale Moore.

"Shall I go on, sir?" he said.

"Pray do," replied the lawyer.

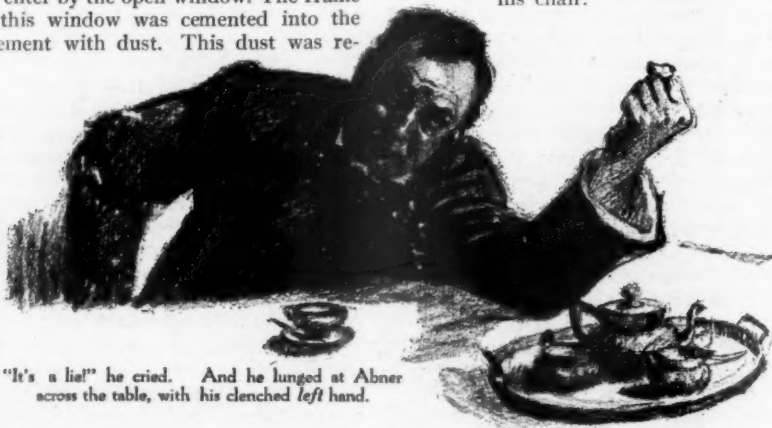
The Virginian continued, in his deep, level voice.

"Now, sir, you will realize why Randolph and I felt an instinctive fear of the result of these deductions, and perhaps, sir, why your subconscious conclusions went no further than a premonition."

"But the law of Virginia," put in the Justice, "is no respecter of persons. If the Governor should do a murder, his office would not save him from the gallows."

"It would not," said the lawyer. "Go on, Abner."

The big Virginian moved slightly in his chair.



"It's a lie!" he cried. And he lunged at Abner across the table, with his clenched left hand.

moved only on the inside. Moreover, violence had been used to force it open, and the marks of this violence were all plainly visible on the inside of the frame."

He stopped, remained a moment silent, and then continued:

"This corridor is the usual and customary way—in fact, the only way leading from the north wing of Eastwood Court to the south wing. Duncan Moore alone occupied the south wing. And, sir, on this night, Northcote Moore and yourself alone occupied the north wing. You were both equally familiar with this

"If the aged Duncan Moore were removed," he continued, "Northcote Moore would take the manor-house and the lands. For Esdale Moore to take the estate, both the aged Duncan Moore and the present incumbent must be removed. Only the aged Duncan Moore was removed. Who was planning a gain, then, by this criminal act? Esdale Moore or Northcote Moore?"

"Another significant thing: Mr. Esdale Moore knew this secretary was unlocked on this night; Northcote Moore did not. Who, then, was the more likely

to break it open as evidence of a presumptive robbery?

"And, finally, sir, who would grope along this corridor feeling with his hands for the corners and angles of the wall, one who could see, or a blind man?"

The Virginian stopped and sat back in his chair.

The lawyer leaned over and put both arms on the table.

"Gentlemen," he said, since he addressed both Randolph and the Virginian, "you amaze me! You accuse the most prominent man in Virginia."

"Before the law," said the Justice, "all men are equal."

The lawyer turned toward the Virginian, as to one of more consideration.

"While you were making your deductions," he said, "I had to insist that you go on, for I was myself included.

I was bound to hear you to the end, although you shocked me at every step. But now, I beg

Abner lifted his face, placid, unmoving, like a mask.

"Perhaps," he said.

The two men before him at the table moved with astonishment.

"Perhaps!" cried the Justice of the Peace. "This is Virginia!"

But it was the lawyer who was the more amazed. He had not moved; he did not move; but his face, as by some sorcery, became suddenly perplexed.

THE tavern was now deserted; everyone had gone back into the courthouse. The three men

you to reflect. Northcote Moore belongs to an ancient and honorable family. He is old; he is blind. Surely something can be done to save him."

"Nothing," replied the Justice firmly.



were alone. There was silence except for the noises of the village and the far-off hum of winged insects in the air. Mr. Esdale Moore sat facing north along the upper porch; Abner opposite; Randolph looking eastward toward the courthouse. The Virginian did not go on at once. He reached across the table for one of the tobacco cigarettes. The lawyer mechanically took up the box with his hand nearest to the Justice of the Peace and opened the lid with his thumb and finger. Abner selected one but did not light it.

"Writers on the law," he began, "warn us against the obvious inference when dealing with the intelligent criminal agent, and for this reason: While the criminal of the lowest order seeks only to cover his identity, and the criminal of the second order to indicate another rather than himself, the criminal of the first order, sir, will sometimes undertake a subtle finesse—a double intention.

"The criminal of the lowest order gives the authorities no one to suspect. The criminal of the second order sets up a straw man before his own door, hoping to mislead the authorities. But the criminal of the first order sets it before the door of another, expecting the authorities of the state to knock it down and take the man behind it.

"Now, sir,"—the Virginian paused,—"*looked at from this quarter, do not our obvious deductions lack a certain conclusiveness?*"

"If Northcote Moore were hanged for murder, Esdale Moore would take the manor-house and the landed estate. Therefore, he might wish Northcote Moore hanged, just as Northcote Moore might wish Duncan Moore murdered.

"And, if one were deliberately placing a straw man, would there be any inconsistency in breaking open a secretary obviously unlocked? The straw, sir, would be only a trifle more conspicuous!

"And the third deduction,"—his gray eyes narrowed, and he spoke slowly: "If one born blind, and another, were accustomed to go along a passage day after day in the dark, who would grope, feeling day in the light, and they should attempt

step by step along the angles of the wall—he who could see, or the blind man?"

The amazed Justice struck the table with his clenched hand.

"By the gods," he cried, "*not the blind man!* For to the blind man, the passage was always dark!"

The lawyer had not moved, but his face, in its desperate perplexity, began to sweat. The Justice swung around upon him, but the Virginian put out his hand.

"A moment, Randolph," he said. "The human body is of a curious structure. It has two sides, as though two similar mechanisms were joined with a central trunk—the dexter side, or that which is toward the south when the man is facing the rising sun, and the sinister side, or that which is toward the north. These sides are not coequal. One of them is controlling and dominates the man, and when the task before him is difficult, it is with this more efficient controlling side that he approaches it.

"Thus, one set on murder and desperately anxious to make no sound, to make no false step, to strike no turn or angle, would instinctively follow the side of the wall that he could feel along with his controlling hand. This passage runs north and south. The bloody fingerprints are all on the west side of the wall, the prints in the dust on the east side; therefore, the assassin followed the east side of the wall when he set out on his deadly errand, and the west side when he returned with the blood on him.

"That is to say,"—and his voice lifted into a stronger note,—"*he always followed the left side of the wall.*"

"Why, sir?" And he got on his feet, his voice ringing, his finger pointing at the sweating, cornered man. "*Because his controlling side was on the left—because he was left handed!*"

"And you, sir—I have been watching you—"

The pent-up energies of Mr. Esdale Moore seemed to burst asunder.

"It's a lie!" he cried.

And he lunged at Abner across the table, with his clenched left hand.

**Of course Abner was right. His form of deduction always is right. You will appreciate this especially in "The Edge of the Shadow," which will be in the May Red Book Magazine, on the news-stands April 23rd.**



# The Conspiracy at the Château

*A story of old France and new America, of high courage and glamorous romance, by the master of that style of story-writing.*

By Edwin Balmer

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. GARDNER-SOPER

**I**F you have seen recent issues of *American Country Mansions*, you will recall illustrations of the French château just built on the Straits of Mackinac in Northern Michigan. It is an almost perfect reproduction of a Touraine ducal residence of the early fifteen hundreds, the article claims; and the pictures prove it.

The first—the full-page illustration which made you turn the magazine side up—was the view from the Straits and showed the towers and dormers and high pointed roofs over the tops of trees. The next photograph, from the slopes to the west, shows the château gardens and the Gothic corbels and piers and the graceful arches as at Chenonceaux. The groining of the vaults of the vestibule reminds the initiate of that castle, as does the guards room; then there is the replica of Ann of Brittany's room at Langeais; there are the great drawing-

room and the dining-room beyond—and no mere replicas, these. For, in very fact, they are the magnificent rooms of the old Château de Montsigny, wainscot, panel and beam, mantel, carving and casement. Even the boards of the floor of the old castle were taken up, numbered, wrapped and shipped over and relaid so that in the dining-room the stain on the floor still shows—the stain of the blood of thé viscount killed there in a duel for speaking a woman's name lightly. The great mediæval kitchen also is—but one need not go on. *American Country Mansions* devoted twenty pages and twenty-eight illustrations to the place. Of personalities now associated with this French royal residence on the slopes above the Straits, the article mentions simply that the château is the country estate of Mr. John Thormly of Chicago.

The Thormly brand of canned peas, corn, tomatoes, tongue and most other

edibles is widely known. It was so well established as long as twenty years ago that Mrs. Thormly's first journey abroad in '95 was an item for the society columns of Chicago newspapers. To be sure, that trip was a tour in a party personally conducted by a chinless gentleman who arranged all routes, engaged rooms without bath and paid for all meals and liquidated fees on one hundred pounds of baggage for less than four dollars per person a day. The party spent five days visiting the château country, and when Mrs. Thormly returned, she wrote a paper about that part of her trip which she read before her woman's club. A reporter, who happened to be present, wrote a comment upon the paper which made John Thormly exceedingly proud.

So he sent his wife back to Touraine the next summer; and further,—the sales of canned goods were soaring,—he hired a photographer to go with her to take just what she saw. Thus Mrs. Thormly became an authority upon the châteaux, and it became recognized that the important part of her itinerary in Europe was the motor trip down the valleys of the Loire, the Indre and the Vienne. "Mrs. John Thormly will spend the summer," said the Chicago papers, "re-visiting her favorite châteaux."

The tone implied an intimacy, almost a proprietorship, most gratifying to John Thormly. He pictured his wife as received at "her" castles by hosts, perhaps a little flattered at the new notice she brought them, or at least cordial and interested. Then came the summer when he accompanied her abroad and motored with her to the door of his first château. Before Mrs. Thormly realized what he was doing, he had presented his card to the porter and ordered it taken in. The lackey stared; the name was not recognized there. "If Monsieur wishes to see the château, of course he may—"

Mrs. Thormly regained her breath and undertook explanation. Crimson with chagrin, John Thormly turned with dignity from the porter. He was a mile away in his motor before he trusted himself to speak; then he said shortly and decisively:

"I did not suspect, my dear, that you

had been paying servants to take you through people's houses when the family was away. If you had told me it meant that much to you to be in a château, I might have built you one. I'll build you one now,"—this was somewhat disconnected and said while glancing back—"and show them!"

HE did it. For six years, architects, stone-carvers, wood-workers, artists, joiners and cabinet-makers labored in France and in America. What they could purchase and transfer entire, they brought over; the rest they copied or restored and blended all into one beautiful whole. So, when they rested in the summer of the seventh year, the château of John Thormly stood above the Straits a rival of any ancient residence of France.

Yet something was lacking. The Thormlys took possession of the castle and even entertained guests, but it was as though they were trespassers in their own house. He had spent more than a million to escape the sensation; still, John Thormly and his wife seemed paying servants to permit them in the château while the family was away.

So the Thormlys returned to Chicago earlier in the autumn than they had planned, and left the place to the steward until February. Then young Hugh Thormly, the son, suddenly decided to run up for a few days.

Hugh had taken a law course before finishing college, because he had to do something to escape the call to the canning business; and afterwards he had done fairly well in practice. He had been good natured enough to accept a candidacy for state's attorney upon a ticket which, he felt assured, had no chance whatever; and he had polled a vote in the primary elections which both surprised and dismayed him. But this even more astonished and alarmed certain unpleasant political gentlemen who forthwith set themselves, most disagreeably, to "get" him. Their methods of maligning had so incensed young Thormly that he determined really to go after election in April; but first he decided to give himself a week away from everything before returning to the ruck



of vote-seeking. Without saying anything to anyone, he took the night train north and should have arrived at St. Ignace the next morning had not a snow-storm blocked the track. Accordingly he reached the sleepy little French settlement on the Straits in the afternoon and from there floundered on horseback through the drifts till at dusk he came in sight of the château.

"What a house to have!" Thormly exclaimed to himself as he rested his horse and gazed at the white walls of the castle, gray and ghostlike, through the drifting snow. "If Great-grandfather only could have begun training the family!" to it! Hello! What's all that for? What's going on there?" he questioned as he rode nearer and darkness fell and he saw lights glinting from the front windows, and the red and yellow reflection from flaming fagots. He had sent ahead no word warning of his coming; so Jacques Corbot, the steward, should be alone there with a couple of other men in the servants' wing at the rear; but the whole front of the house was ablaze.

Thormly hastened his horse to the entrance, leaped down and beat upon the heavy double doors. An electric bell was there; but Thormly felt it foolish to push a button to call a servant to those doors. He pounded again and shouted, and then he heard some one at the bolts; the doors opened and a lackey looked out. The man wore the livery of the old Montsigny servants, which Mrs. Thormly had adopted, but his face was strange; he evidently was French, and he made it plain that he did not know Thormly. He held a candle in a heavy candlestick which he thrust almost in Thormly's face.

"What wish you, monsieur?"

Thormly gave his name. The lackey repeated it unfamiliarly.

"I am the owner, or rather his son," Thormly explained and stepped in.

"What is it you say?" the man challenged.

"Owner, his son—*fils* or however you may say it. I came by horse—*cheval*. You see?" Thormly proudly recollected an occasional key-word from his college French. "See the *cheval*?"

"Yes, Monsieur!"

"Look after him then. I can find my own way in."

He took the candle from the lackey's hand and motioned to make his meaning plain. The man hesitated, estimated Thormly doubtfully and then went out to the horse. Thormly turned with the candle and went down the dark, vaulted vestibule to the great guard-room where a fire was blazing; logs flamed also in the huge hooded fireplace in the drawing-room, and the tall, thick candles on the table were lighted. The linen covers, which had been put on the furniture when the owners departed, had been removed; there were flowers in a vase and a bit of unfinished embroidery of delicate pattern on the table.

Thormly exclaimed as he saw this. He took off his gloves and picked it up; and as his fingers felt the fine quality of the piece, he looked about the room with realization that, whatever he had surprised here, it was no mere vulgar occupation of front rooms by servants. Something else was on foot in the château. He stood still and strained his ears to listen; but the great house was all silent. There was an old bell and little metal mallet on the table; he took up the hammer and struck the bell softly and then loudly. The sound echoed through the room but brought no response. Thormly returned to the guard-room and to the vestibule. The lackey and the horse had disappeared. Thormly strode back toward the salon.

The place had never seemed to him so perfectly mediæval before. It now was dead black without; the flicker of the candles glinted back from jet panes. With the night, the storm was increasing, and the wind shrieked about the corners of the château. Within, through the long halls and the great rooms, silence was complete save for the snap of a fire or the fall of a burnt fagot. But as he re-entered the drawing-room, Thormly gasped and stopped short with amazement.

A GIRL was standing before the fire and gazing at him—a young, delicately-made, graceful girl with dark, lustrous hair, high-bred features, full little lips and well-formed chin, and with



her pretty, rounded throat bare. She wore a simple silk evening gown appropriate to a young woman of nineteen or twenty. Its color at first appeared to be pink, but it was as hard to tell in the red light of the fire as it was difficult to determine whether the crimson on her cheek and throat was a sudden flush as she faced him or was the glow of the flames on her white flesh. Her arms were bare, and a hand, which was very small and slender, rested on the collar of a greyhound which stood beside her. The dog started suspiciously toward Thormly and broke the slight hold of the girl's fingers.

"Gil!" She recalled and rebuked the dog gently. "Good evening, Monsieur!" she said to Thormly then. She was as surprised to see him as he to find her, but she concealed it politely. She looked at the bell on the table and at his cap and gloves, which he had left beside the embroidery. "It was you who rang a moment ago?"

"Yes," said Thormly.

"Where is Pierre?"

Thormly managed to meet her with less open astonishment. At his first sight of her, he had received the impression that he knew her—not as one knows an acquaintance but as one may be familiar with a person of high place whose picture, perhaps, has often been seen. Her voice was soft and clear and shy at the same time that it took a patrician tone and quality delightful as it was strange to Thormly. She spoke her English syllables with a pretty, precise accent evidently carefully learned. She was French, but without suggestion of the flashiness of Paris. She was of the old provinces or perhaps of Quebec: quaint, simple and charming. So, though Thormly knew that she could have no right of such possession as she assumed, he felt himself the intruder, rude and awkward before her in his rough coat with snow melting upon it.

"You mean the man who let me in?" he replied. "I sent him to see to my horse."

"Of course. It could not stand in the cold." She hesitated, waiting for him to declare himself and why he had come in.

THORMLY encountered her eyes—deep, direct, blue eyes, frank and sweet and disconcerting. She seemed to think him but a chance passer-by driven in by the storm or, possibly, some one who came on an errand to her; she betrayed no idea that she should fear him or be uneasy at his presence. And as Thormly observed this, he determined to test her further.

"My name is Thormly," he told her.

"I am Hugh Thormly. I just came from Chicago."

"I," the girl replied simply, "am Virginie de Valerie. Oh, there is Pierre now. Pierre! Pierre!" She called him and gave him a direction in French.

The man removed the cap and gloves from the table and took Thormly's coat. Virginie de Valerie slipped into a seat before the fire. The dog lay on the floor beside her, his head on his paws, suspiciously watching Thormly. The hound treated him frankly as an outsider, and the girl's manner, though in no way unfriendly, was as unassumed as the dog's. It was certain that she believed that she belonged there. Thormly's mention of his name, so far from disturbing her, merely had assured her that he was no one whom she should have known.

"Sit down, Monsieur. I know how terrible are the cold and wind to-day." She was trying to lessen his uneasiness at forcing himself upon her hospitality. "I also was in the snow this afternoon. For an hour—glorious! Was it not? Then,"—she shivered—"with the night, it must be impossible to proceed."

"I found it so, Mademoiselle," said Thormly. He seated himself a little further from the fire.

"I don't want you to feel you should push on, unless you must."

"Thank you."

"You feel the warmth there?"

"Very well."

THE doors to the dining-room opened, and an austere, dignified manservant, upwards of fifty, appeared—and recoiled. If Thormly had been disappointed at the lack of effect of his name on the girl, that was more than made up for by Jacques. The steward had not known, till he opened the doors,



A girl was standing before the fire—a young, delicately-formed, graceful girl with dark, lustrous hair, high-bred features, full little lips and well formed chin, and with her pretty, rounded throat bare. She wore a simple silk evening gown appropriate to a young woman of nineteen or twenty. Her arms were bare, and a hand, which was very small and slender, rested on the collar of a greyhound. The dog started suspiciously toward Thornly.

that anyone had come in, and now Thormly paralyzed him with terror. So the present occupation of the château had been arranged by Jacques! The new lackey, Pierre, probably was ignorant of anything wrong; the young girl certainly was innocent. Whoever had bought from Jacques the use of the château must be tricking her, and the steward was in the conspiracy. As he realized that, Thormly had a hot impulse to strike the steward; but as he saw Jacques' terror before him, he waited. He looked away, betraying no recognition of the servant, as Jacques somewhat recovered and managed to murmur what he had come to announce:

"Mademoiselle, the dinner is served."

The girl, in her own excitement at the presence of the unexpected guest, noticed nothing out of the way as she arose.

"You will dine with me, Monsieur Tormli?" she invited timidly.

Thormly arose: "Thank you, Mademoiselle."

"Jacques, Monsieur Tormli, who has come from Chicago, honors us this evening."

The steward cast a miserable appeal to Thormly as he turned away. "Yes, Mademoiselle."

She led the way into the dining-room, warmed like the other apartments, by a blazing fire and also lighted by candles. The table, which was heavy and old but small for that room, had been set for only one person; but Jacques, with trembling hands, arranged silver at a second place. Pierre also appeared and began lighting with a taper the candles in the heavy candelabra at both ends of the room; the candles on the table were already gleaming.

Thormly comprehended for the first time that the girl, for that evening at least, was alone in the château, except for the servants. He halted at the dining-room door.

"I beg you to pardon me after all, Mademoiselle," he said confusedly. "I dined very late this afternoon. I had forgotten. I don't need anything."

She moved toward him with quick concern. "You are indisposed, Monsieur?"

"A trifle, perhaps."

"Why, I did not understand!" she reproached herself. "I see you are pale now, Monsieur. It must have been terrible outside. You would like to lie down upstairs? Jacques, see that a room at once is ready!"

"No, no, please!" Thormly hastened to correct his error. "It's no more than a little reaction after coming in, I think," he apologized. "I should have said nothing about it. Probably a little bouillon is what I need."

"I hope it, Monsieur."

THORMLY sat down, his heart beating with surprising throbs from her instant of physical closeness to him, her sweet concern and anxious little suggestions as she watched him across the table. At his right the logs in the fireplace roared and blazed; on the other side of the table, the low windows, backed by the black of the night, mirrored the flames and sent some of the ruddy light dancing on the handles and blades of old weapons upon the wall; and all about the room, portraits of noblemen and ladies looked down from the dusk above the windows, the mantel and the serving tables. Their observation always had awed young Thormly, and his father and mother and anyone whom they had entertained there, and made them seem more out of place. But to Thormly, the young girl at the other end of the table was not so awed, and under the eyes of the noblest of the ancient family of Montsigny, this young French maiden seemed merely the more in place and utterly unconscious of herself and sweet and natural. And Thormly was hot with joy at realization that, whatever threatened her, she was not yet harmed and he had come in time to protect her.

"You feel better now, Monsieur?" She noted with pretty relief the change in him.

"Yes. I am quite all right now. This is a wonderful room—a wonderful château!"

"Wonderful?" the girl repeated.

"Monsieur, to me it is miraculous, though since I can remember anything, first my mother—I can just recall her—told me it would be mine some day; then

Benoîte and Jacques always said it. I know now it is true; yet when I awake in the morning, I must pinch myself still. I am not able to believe."

"Jacques?" questioned Thormly. "Benoîte, who are they?"

"This is Jacques, Monsieur." She touched with affection the hand of the steward, with a result that he all but dropped the dish he was serving her. "Benoîte is his mother and my nurse; also she was the nurse of my mother. She now is very old."

"I see; then—you have not been here long?"

"Let me count—a week ago Tuesday, ten days. I was in the convent till then, near St. Damien."

"St. Damien?"

"De Bellechase. It is not far from Quebec."

"You came here from the convent?"

"Do you wonder I must bite my lips to be sure I am awake? One day, my little white room at the convent, my lamp, my lesson books; that is all; then—this!"

SHE leaned back with eyes shut, and her long, dark lashes lay on her cheek; and for the instant Thormly could look and look at the delicate perfection of her skin, her lips and throat, and her little bosom rising and falling with her breath.

"Eighteen—nineteen!" she counted aloud. "Twenty!" She opened her eyes. "There!" she looked about triumphantly. "There, Monsieur! I have done that again as a thousand times before, and all is still here. Yet if this were not real and I shut my eyes like that and counted twenty, I must be back in my little white room, must I not?"

Thormly could make no response. The delightful fitness of this young girl for the place in which she had been put had made him forget that when he discovered the plot of those who brought her here, he must be the one to undeceive her and send her away. And to send her away was the last thing that he wished. He glanced from her to the steward behind her chair and surprised an agony on Jacques' face which upset him. The steward, whatever he plotted, surely

planned no harm for her; and with quick instinct, Thormly now comprehended that Jacques had been dismayed at his coming as endangering or compromising this girl.

"If you should not be in this place, Mademoiselle," Thormly said, "who should be?"

And he looked back to the steward to learn more; but Jacques was watching the greyhound.

The dog, before the fire, raised his head as at a sound from without and arose, stalked about the table toward the windows and growled. Thormly jumped from his seat; Jacques already was at the window. A face—the big, staring face of a man, was outside. It vanished; and Jacques, snatching at the lock, threw the window open. Pierre, returning to the room, sprang to Jacques' assistance, but the steward needed none. He reached through the window and seized the man, who at first resisted, then suddenly gave to Jacques' grasp, climbed in through the window and gained the room before he shook off the steward's hand and squared to the others defiantly.

THE girl, whose first start of fright had been succeeded by a cry of pity, recoiled as the man stared at her. Nothing about the fellow called for pity; he was a large man, well and warmly dressed, and though the snow on his coat told that he had been long outside, he had not suffered from the cold; he faced the three men and the girl as if in triumph over them, and with a threat. He stared from Thormly to the girl and back to Thormly again with a grin of gratification and insulted them with his laugh.

"Hobart!" Thormly cried his recognition.

"Hello, Thormly!" Hobart returned.

"Hello! Hello!"

"What are you doing here?"

"I guess I've done it, Thormly; haven't I? I've got the goods on you now."

"What?"

"You sneaked out of Chicago without telling anyone where you were going; and you thought you got away for a

week where you wouldn't be watched. How about it, Thormly? You didn't think we'd guess you'd come here in midwinter. But you see I'd got the tip before you left Chicago that she was brought here last week; so I was in St. Ignace waiting for you to come up for your visit here."

Thormly backed to the edge of the table, his face white and his lips thin and straight in his rage. This man Hobart was the bitterest of those determined to block his election; Hobart had tried for weeks to find evidence against Thormly's character to use in the campaign; he had set men vainly to pry into Thormly's private life for a scandal; now he believed he had uncovered one.

Jacques and Pierre had stepped back when Thormly recognized the intruder. Thormly advanced alone, his eyes blazing.

"Apologize for that, Hobart! Beg pardon on your knees. Take that back!"

"Take what back?" Hobart held his ground. "That your servants brought her here from Quebec? That she's been here alone, except for your servants, till you arrived this evening? Or will you try to tell me you're married to her? All right! Where? When? By whom?"

"Good God!" Thormly cried. He turned abjectly to the girl. She was standing, cheeks burning red, her eyes wide, her lips parted and gasping for breath; she was terrified, but she had understood little of the meaning of the charge against her. And as Thormly saw this, his heart leaped with a passion to protect her, to keep her pure and innocent, and to strike down the one who would sully her. He fought for control of himself for the moment and turned calmly to the steward.

"Take Mlle. de Valerie away, Jacques. You too may go," he said to Pierre. "You may leave this man to me."

He disregarded Hobart for a moment more, during which he turned and bowed to the girl as she went out. The servants followed and closed the doors behind them.

**H**OBART moved further into the room. He took off his cap and gloves and tossed them among the dishes.

He was a man little older than Thormly, about the same height but somewhat heavier and more powerful. He looked around with insolent interest, and his eyes rested on the large painting above the mantel. This held him so intently for an instant that Thormly glanced up too. The painting had been in dim light and almost invisible when Thormly had been at the table; but now it stood out sharp, distinct. By accident—or might it have been by design?—Jacques before leaving had shifted the tall candelabra so as to light the canvas: it depicted two men, dueling to the death, thrusting at each other's hearts with rapiers.

The duelists were dressed in the garb of gentlemen of two hundred years before; but the table with plate and glasses upon it beside which they fought was the table now before Hobart; the fireplace, with the flames blazing beside the swordsmen and giving favor of light to neither, was the fireplace with the burning logs now giving forth heat; and the candelabra placed in the picture so as to show each duelist's thrust to the other, were the same as those holding the candles which now displayed the duel. Hobart's glance from the canvas down to the mantel with weapons upon it and back to the painting told that he recognized this.

"Yes; they fought in this room," Thormly confirmed. "The man to the right was the Duc de Montsigny; the other fellow insulted a woman. De Montsigny hardly knew the girl, but he killed that man beside this table. They say that spot on the floor"—Thormly pointed to Hobart's feet—"is his blood. Those are their swords on the edge of the mantel."

Hobart pulled off his coat. "Well, Thormly, what have you got to say?"

"What do you expect?"

"That you withdraw from the campaign to-night or as quick as you can get your announcement to the press."

"Or else?" demanded Thormly.

"Or else the facts of this pretty little party of yours up here will be published, with pictures, wherever there's a newspaper. The press is supplied with your photograph already; and I haven't

exactly killed my time in St. Ignace waiting for you. Your little lady's kept close; but I've got a snapshot or two of her about the building here. Just the thing to go with the story."

"Look out!" Thormly warned. "I tell you you lie! You know nothing of that girl!"

"I don't? Well, who is she if I'm wrong about you and her? Why's she here? What's she doing?"

"I cannot tell you," Thormly returned.

"You can't?"

"Because I do not know."

"You don't?" Hobart mocked again.

WITH a greater effort, Thormly controlled himself. "I do not. I found her here after I came unexpectedly an hour ago. I saw that through some mistake, of which she was not aware, she was here. I have had no chance to find out from my man how it came about. As things happened, I could see no way but to take dinner here; after that I was going back to St. Ignace for the night. I—"

Hobart stopped him with derision. The man came about the table and faced Thormly menacingly between the table and the fire.

"You don't know who she is? You found her here after you came unexpectedly? Through some mistake, she is here! That's good, Thormly; that's great! You were going right back to St. Ignace! You—"

Young Thormly controlled himself no longer. He raised his arm and struck Hobart violently in the face. The man, surprised, infuriated, staggered back at the force of the blow; and a hand, clutching for support, caught the mantel and slipped from it, then grasped again and this time seized the hilt of one of the rapiers. Hobart found his footing and, feeling the sword in his hand, his black rage made him shift so that, as he straightened, he thrust and threatened with the blade.

"Good!" Thormly cried madly, snatching the other blade from the mantel. "Come on, if you want it! Where they fought for the same thing! Come on and I'll give it to you!"

Steel rang, and both men stood their ground. Neither knew how to fence; neither had held rapier or any other sword in hand except to examine as a curiosity; but the surprise of blade against blade, the scrape of steel and the foil of attempted thrust steadied each man's arm. The leaping light of the fire, the flicker of guttering candles, the ancient room, gave grimness; in such a place men fought thus. Thormly felt his sword slipping past his antagonist's guard; Hobart gasped and leaned back. But Thormly's point caught in the other's coat, and something dripped as the rapier drew clear. Hobart, breathing harder, swore and lunged; his point pierced Thormly's forearm. Thormly's grip half loosened, then tightened harder; and as his blood ran from the wound, he pressed Hobart's rapier aside and madly tried to strike again.

"Messieurs!" Jacques' voice, loud in alarm, cried to them, "Stop!" The steward sprang from the doorway, seized a saber from the wall and dashed up the rapiers as they grated again, and swung his heavy blade to force the fighters apart.

"Monsieur Thormly, and you, Monsieur, stop!" he commanded. "Stand away! You do not comprehend. I am to blame for all. I have done all wrong that is done."

THE two dropped back, staring at each other wild-eyed, disheveled, breathless, both bleeding a little. Their points pricked the floor.

"The trouble is that Mlle. de Valerie is here, is it not, Messieurs?" Jacques cried quickly to forestall move or word from either. "I am to blame for that—I alone, with my mother. Listen, Messieurs, in this room of the Château de Montsigny, listen to me. From the time of the king Louis Fourteen—the grand monarch—my people have served in this room—the men as butlers, stewards, the women as maids, nurses. Through the long reign of Louis, through the Revolution, the Commune, the Empire, the Republic, the Empire again, my people have been loyal, serving always those of Montsigny!

"Messieurs, it is the Empire of Louis



Napoleon: My father serve Monseigneur de Montsigny in this room. My mother care for the baby, Mlle. Virginie. I am a boy, ten year; sometimes I may look into this room. The war comes; Monseigneur is killed; my father is dead. Madame, servants, all are ordered from the château. Our soldiers are within; they defend. The German guns! All is over! Soon Paris is taken, and in Paris again the Commune! All of Montsigny is lost; Monseigneur is dead, the estate gone, the Château ruin', a stable for German horse. But in Quebec is a cousin to whom Madame fly till the day when, as always before, the fortune of Montsigny return, the château is restore and those of Montsigny again possess their own!"

The steward hesitated and gazed from Thormly on his left to the other man on his right; Jacques held his position between them as though it were necessary still to keep them apart, and he still clutched his saber; but now he looked down and proceeded more slowly.

"Awaiting this fortune in Quebec, Madame die and Mademoiselle grow up and marry Monsieur de Valerie. My mother and I, Messieurs—I now am a man—serve them. Monsieur de Valerie is a gentleman, but he cannot regain the Château. He work in Quebec and cannot always pay me; but of course, my mother and I, we serve. The trouble of Montsigny cannot be for alway; some time they must return to the Château. But Monsieur de Valerie dies; Madame is very sick. And when she lie on her bed about to die—Messieurs, the so young, so beautiful Madame, so proud, so brave, who my mother has nurse and I one thousand times carried on my shoulder—she call the little Mademoiselle to her:

"'Virginie,' she say, 'I leave you to Benoîte'—that is my mother, Messieurs—and to Jacques. They will take good care of you and serve you; will you not, Benoîte? Jacques? Just now, Virginie, we may be poor; but we are of the Montsigny; so all will be well again, and when you are big, it will no longer be only Benoîte and Jacques here, but you shall go to the Château! Will you not take her there surely, Benoîte?

Jacques? The Château—' And she tell her again and again all about the Château, how she is only away from it for a time, how it is hers and so surely she will be lady there some day. Then, she died.

"MESSIEURS, now can you see how it come? The Mademoiselle so pretty, so shy, so trust to us—is very poor. My mother never leave her; but I must take service in another house that they have bread to eat. And my mother—now she is getting old, she is as old as the Empress Eugénie, Messieurs—I do not know whether she believe as the child believe or what it is that she thinks; but when I go to see them, always she has told Mademoiselle more of the Château and that surely soon we will take her there; only a little longer must she be so poor and served by old Benoîte and Jacques alone. The time of the grand surprise will come, and she shall go to the Château. But I, Messieurs, am trouble'. I speak to my mother; but she say, 'How many times, though they have been very poor, have those of Montsigny returned to their own? Has not the Madame said it shall be again? Who are we to say that it shall not be so?' I cannot reply; and when the little Mademoiselle say, 'Jacques, is it true? Is there the grand secret? Shall I go to the Château?' I cannot say no. Yet now she is at the convent of the good sisters and is all but a lady and soon must come back to us; and what shall I say to her? Then, Messieurs, I read that here the Château is restored."

The servant raised his eyes and, with a shrink of his shoulders, gazed about the great room.

"Messieurs, when I come here to see it is true, how strange I feel! I cannot leave; I apply for place. I serve in these rooms where my fathers always have serve',—these rooms where my little Virginie should be serve',—and the bold plan comes to me which, I believe, can hurt no one.

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THE servant stepped back a little and appealed from one to the other. From Thormly, Jacques saw that he now had nothing to fear; the young man's eyes had softened, and he gazed at the steward with understanding, almost with gratitude. But the other man stood still, hostile and scornful. The prick of the rapier point in his shoulder, the realization of how close he had come to death or to dealing death in the madness of the moment, cooled Hobart; he still clung to his sword, as Thormly also held his, but his other hand pinched his coat over his cut to stop the blood.

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"The work of God?"

Jacques pointed through the doors to the salon. In the light of the candles, the figures of two women appeared; one was a feeble, white-haired and wrinkled old woman, plainly a servant, but proud and erect in spite of her years, and dignified; the other was the girl, known as Virginie de Valerie, who had gone

from the room a few moments before; and yet, in a way, this was not she. For she was changed. Her garb was very different; instead of her simple silk gown, she wore a stately, stiff costume of the Second Empire of France, with low neck, tight bodice and wide skirt; her beautiful dark hair, which before had been simply arranged as becoming a young girl, now was dressed after the fashion of the court of the Empress Eugénie.

Proud, straight and stately and followed by her old servant, she entered the room.

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She halted at his cry, just within the doorway, and the steward lifted a heavy candelabrum which had been lighting the painting of the duel and bore it beside the girl so that the candles showed her in better light and also brought from the darkness above her a portrait on the wall. And, as the others looked up, they saw the beautiful, sensitive face and the deep, direct eyes of the girl gazing down at them from the canvas. So striking, indeed, was the likeness, that the first glance convinced that the portrait must be of the little maid below; and the dress and the old-fashioned ornaments were identical; then one realized that the picture was of a girl of a former generation, of the time of Louis Napoleon.

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"You want anything more, Hobart?" Thormly asked.

THE man shifted his eyes. He laid down his rapier on the table and caught up his overcoat and cap and gloves.

"Go with him," Thormly directed Pierre. "See that he gets what he needs."

Hobart held his coat so that it covered his hurt as he went by the girl to the door. Beyond her, he stopped and turned back as though he were going to say something. Then he bowed awkwardly. "Good night," he muttered, and went out.

Virginie de Valerie advanced toward Thormly. "Monsieur!" she cried with concern. "You also are hurt!"

"Very little, Mademoiselle."

"But it was because of me! And besides, I have brought to you great trouble."

"Trouble?"

"Jacques, Benoîte, now they have told to me how I am here. This is not mine! I have no right here!"

Thormly looked at the little maid, brought to the great castle from her little white-walled convent room, who stood so straight, so proud before him, trying to wink away the wetness of shame from her eyes. The stiff old stately costume, which at first had made her seem older, now showed her as only a little girl dressed up, and younger and fairer and even gentler than before, so that Thormly longed to bend and kiss her and take her to him and tell her that all he had, or even might have, was hers, and that he wished only to protect her always and to serve her and—love her.

"You have brought me no trouble, Mademoiselle," he said. "That man is an enemy, but he is honest. He made a mistake and now knows it. I do not fear anything more from him. And instead of trouble, you have given me the greatest and the happiest hour of my

life. I take away with me to-night only a marvelous remembrance."

Her eyes widened. "You go away, Monsieur? It is I who go."

"No, Mademoiselle."

The little girl gazed, puzzled, at the young man who has found her in his place, who had said no word to disturb her there, who had fought for her when another came and now offered to go away that she might stay.

"You did not hear me, perhaps, Monsieur," she repeated softly. "I said I know now I have not the right here; I know all. They have told me. This is not my place."

"On the contrary,"—Thormly dared look directly at her no longer,—*"it is the place of no one else. I and my people have merely paid for this house; we have not made it ours. You and only you can do that for us, Mademoiselle."*

"I?"

"So I ask you to remain here as you are, at least till I can return. For I will come back, if I may, with my mother. I want to go and tell her she is invited to a château, at last, when one of the family is there. May I, Mademoiselle?"

She flushed. "I do not understand, Monsieur. I stay and invite your mother?"

Her eyes again met Thormly's, and what she saw seemed to satisfy her that, though she could not quite comprehend what he wished or why he wished it, it must be right. And within her some strange sensation stirred which was not just gratitude to him for kindness, nor admiration at his fighting for her nor anxiety at his hurt nor—nor quite like anything she ever had felt before. It made her, alternately, cold and then all warm within; it made her lips tremble and her finger-tips tingle and her eyes suddenly fall from his.

"You wish me to wait for you and your mother? Why yes, Monsieur, if you ask it," said Virginie de Valerie of Montsigny.



# What's the Matter With Our House?

*COME now for a visit with the Stovers of Pembina—Ma and Pa and the children. They're real folks, well able to entertain a "surprise party," as you shall see.*

By Walter Jones

Author of "A Small-Town Soul," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER J. ENRIGHT

**W**ELL, you know what I think, John Stover! You aint got the backbone I s'posed you had, or you'd never have allowed Will to bring that thing into the house. The children 've already got enough silly contraptions to take their minds off their books. It's a handsome piece of furniture, aint it, with that tin strainer—looks like we were goin' to tap a keg o' cider in the parlor! They'd all be better off to prayer meetin' with their parents than have the whole street in here, hangin' around listenin' to canned screechin'. Hurry up and wash, Pa; I've got this milk toast ready to dip."

"Oh, well now, Mother, I can't see any great harm in a talkin'-machine. The kids are only young once and they're bound to grow up with the styles o' the times. When I was a gawkin' feller, haulin' sand on a dump-cart, I was cracked for one o' them sky-scraper bicycles; and I recollect the first time I ever seen a certain party, she was at a picnic with a fancy bustle on. If they want to have a little music—"

"Music! Do you call what they've got on them records music? Darkies hollerin' at the top o' their lungs and jig-tunes like a public dance-hall! Put on your coat, Pa, or Jessie'll flax you around good and proper. We're fancy folks, we are, since Jessie's got into the high school. Mary, you can ring the supper bell now and begin bakin' your flannel cakes. I wonder where—"

"Hi, Pop, hi, Pop!" The dining-room door burst open and Roddie Stover hove into the kitchen with a persuasive smile and a yellow-backed pamphlet. "Hi, Pop, here's their new catalogue I was tellin' you about. You're goin' to get me one o' their new models, aint you, like you said, with no chain and a coaster brake? 'Cause a chain's awful dangerous; a feller's liable to ketch his pants and take a flopper, like Skinny Cooper was brought home in the groc'ry wagon to-night with his ear stove in, and you and Mom wouldn't want me to crack my nut! The new models, they've got adjustable handle-bars, and they're five dollars cheaper, and—"

"You march into the bathroom, young man, and wash your hands. It aint a year yet since your pa bought you your last bicycle. Where's Will and Jessie?"

"In the sittin'-room, scrappin'. He says if a feller writes a note to a girl and says to meet him by the band-stand at eight o'clock, it shows he's foxy. And Jess, she says no nice girl'll countnintz a man that wont call to the house after her. Quit shovin' me, Mom. After supper you got to look at the catalogue, Pop, like you promised. Mary, I seen the iceman this afternoon, and he says how's that fat skeezix to your place?"

"Rodman!—you march—this minute! Jessie! Will! I never see such a tribe for dawdlin' to their vittles." Sarah Stover planked her tureen of toast on the table and sat down before it.



Will loped in from the sitting-room. "That talking-machine's got nothing on you for a holler, Mother!" he grinned.

"Oh, Mamma!" Jessie fluttered into her seat with a frown. "Why wont you stay out of the kitchen? You just get yourself all blowed up! What have you got a hired-girl for?"

"So she can raise you up for a fashionable young lady, Jess. What you got on to-night that you're all dolled up?"

"You'd better stick around, Will. Maribelle's going to pinch a dozen new records off her brother-in-law's machine, and we're going to bring 'em up here and play 'em. The whole push'll be along."

"I can't—I've got a date."

"Who with?"

"Oh, a fellow."

"I bet you're going to the Tiger Club dance! Mamma, I think it's the limit. Will can run around anywhere he wants, even when they have 'em in public halls; and I can't learn a two-step here in the house. We could learn just dandy off the discs—"

"Huh?"—Roddie looked up innocently from his fourth flannel cake.

"You don't know how to dance, oh no! Last week, Mom, I seen her and Maribelle—"

"Rodman!"

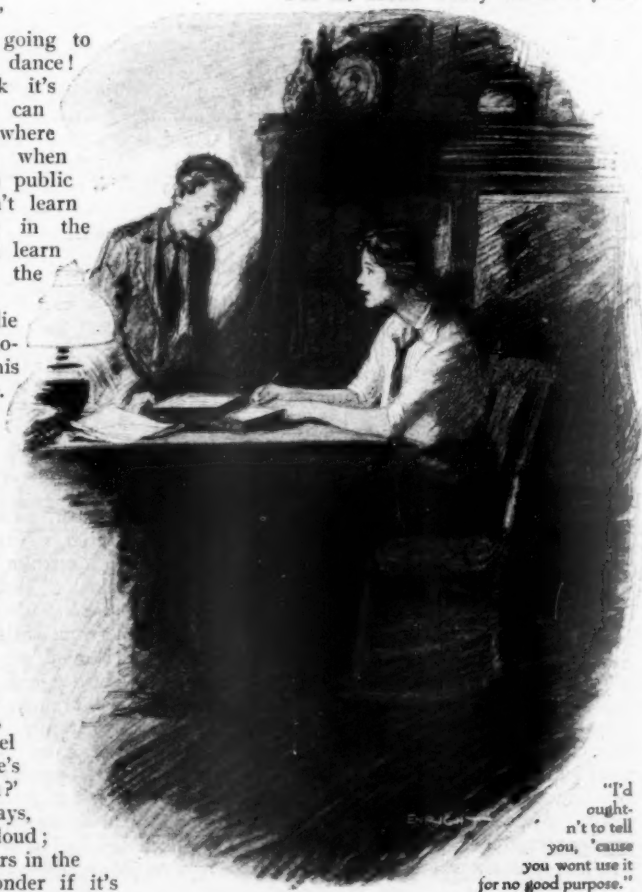
"—I seen her and Maribelle in the parlor floppin' all over each other in one o' them fish walks, and Maribelle says, 'Aint Eddie Stimmel a devil when there's a stick in the punch?' and Jess, she says, 'Yes—not so loud; there's little pitchers in the next room.' I wonder if it's

true in the Club House class they measure 'em with a tape to see if they're holdin' each other proper."

"Why, Rodman Stover, you little story. I never said any such thing. And we weren't dancing at all—just one of those folk drills Miss Catner teaches in the gym'. We could put down the curtains, Mamma, and roll up the rugs, and it wouldn't hurt the floors any—"

"I've never had anything yet, Jessie, go on in my house that had to have the blinds drawn, and I'm not a-goin' to. I don't believe in these modern dances anyway, and that settles it. Rodman, finish your dessert right. You're not settin' foot out o' the house to-night."

"Got to, Mom. Mary wants a yeast



"I'd ought-  
n't to tell  
you, 'cause  
you wont use it  
for no good purpose."

cake, don't you, Mary? And I'm goin' to—"

"You're goin' to stay at home and do your 'rithmetic, young man. We don't need any riz biscuits for breakfast to-morrow."

"Aw, Mom, you make a guy sore. I have to buy a tablet anyway, and Hank Hacker and me wants to look into the pitcher show, just for a couple o' films, till eight o'clock. I traded my air-gun for a strip o' tickets, so it wont take nothing out o' my Sunday-school money. It's goin' to be a grand film, 'The Combat on the Cliff,' two fellers scrappin', and he throws him over: it's a drop o' sixty feet, it says on the posters. Hank's brother seen it last night, and he says it's a humdinger. He is callin' me now. Ya-hoo! Yaa-hooo! I'm comin', Hank! I'll get your yeast cake, Mom. You'd better leave the side door unlocked, 'cause it might be after nine."

"Rodman, stop that yelling in the house! John Stover, are you goin' to let that boy run the town nights like them River Street arabs—!"

"S-s-sh, Mamma, I hear the girls!" Jessie grabbed a piece of cake in her hand and ran to the door, calling over her shoulder, "For heaven's sake, Mamma, if you come in the sitting-room, button your collar and put on an apron. You look like you'd just come out of the sink."

There was a moment's wild jabber at the doorway; then Jessie piloted in half a dozen Pembina High School damsels with their attendant swains. Will ducked up to his room to primp for the Tiger Club dance. Before they could say "Rover!" Pa and Ma Stover were confronting each other across an empty table.

"Well," — Sarah put down her fork with a clatter,—"I'd like to know who runs this house, anyway!"

John Stover reached for the evening's paper with a twinkle. "Nobody, Mother. It runs itself. We're one of those terrible American homes that Pro Bono Publico and For the Good of the Race write about to the newspapers."

"Pro Bono Publico? Who's he? He'd better mind his own business. Well, I s'pose," she sighed, "we'd ought to be

thankful we know where our children are, anyway. Listen to the racket goin' on in there. If I want to do my mending, I s'pose I've got to take it into that bedroom. I told Mary she could have the dining-room to-night for her beau. You'll have to go upstairs with your figurin'."

"Oh, my bid's in for that contract. I guess I'll hang round awhile. I kind o' like to watch the young colts slip the halter, when the field aint too big. You'd ought to write to the *Ladies' Home Companion*, Mother, and ask 'em where the old folks should set when the cook's in the dinin'-room, the kids're in the sittin'-room, and the stove aint up in the parlor."

"In the kitchen, I guess. That's where I'm goin'. Mebbe I'll stir up some fudge for Jessie's tribe after a bit. It always tickles 'em."

"HI, Jess!"

"Rodman, I wish you'd quit hollering at me like that. What do you think I am, a cow?"

"Well then, Miss Stover," — Roddie stuck his tongue in his cheek,—"now are you at home?"

"No, don't bother me, Rod. I've got six algebra problems for to-morrow, and I've already stuck on the first one half an hour." Jessie flipped her pencil back and forth over her empty tablet with a despairing frown. "Now let me see again: 'If A and B—start from two places—ten miles apart on a river, and A rows down the stream at the rate of four miles an hour—and B rows up the stream at the rate of three miles an hour, at what point—'"

"I know somethin' you don't, Jess!"

"Oh, shut up! —At what point will they meet? I'm not sure, should I let X represent the rate of the current, or—"

"It's worth a quarter, but I'll sell it to you for two sodas."

"No more dickers with you, Mister. Last time I gave you a dime and I could have found out Mary's beau kisses her Sunday nights myself. Who's it about?"

"No pay, no say, smarty!"

"Well then, this time! But mind, if it isn't worth it, never again."

"Listen, it's a pippin! And I'd oughtn't to tell you, 'cause you wont use it for no good purpose." He lowered his voice to a mysterious whisper calculated to titillate feminine curiosity. "Yesterday I seen Mom monkeyin' with the talkin'-machine!"

"Why, Rodman Stover, how dare you make up anything like that to me? You know she hates it worse than—"

"It's a dead-bone fact, Jess, snakes in a nigger's coffin if it aint! Yesterday I came home from school, and her and Dilly Bayliss was gabbin' in the sittin'-room, and Mom says mebbe she *is* respectable but nobody in the neighborhood calls on her,—she throws her kitchen slops in the yard,—and Dilly says, 'She *ought* to be ostrichized—what's that box in the corner with the crank?' And Mom turns redder'n a squashy to-mater and clucks in her throat, 'It's a talkin'-machine,' and Dilly says, 'My, aint it swell! I bet they're terrible expensive. I heard you got the only one on Sycamore Street. You couldn't play me a piece, could you?' And right away Mom gets ripe and says, 'Well, o' course we got it as a toy for the children, but if you really want to hear one, I'll be glad to play, Mis' Bayliss.' And what d'you think, Jess, like a regular trained seal she goes and grabs down 'Where the River Shannon Flows,' and Dilly screams, 'Gracious! It sounds just like poor Eddie Beakler that used to sing in the church choir. I wonder if he's got the con' in Arizona now.' And Mom says, 'So it does. I'll play you another one o' his.' Then they got to gabbin' some more, and the needle ran over and knocked the tar out o' the disc, and Dilly says, 'It must be a lot o' company to you,' and Mom coughed and she says, 'Well, once in a while when there's nobody around I come in here and play one o' the quiet pieces.' You can pay me now, 'cause Hank and me want to get the sodas before supper. Aint it a pippin, like I said?"

"It sure is a little pippin, Rod!" Jessie gave her algebra a shove and buried her face in her palms with a smile of young wisdom. "Think of Mamma Stover caught with the goods by her innocent children! The dear old hypo-

crite! Rod, if we work it right, I bet I'll have the whole push one-stepping all over the house by Christmas. Listen: her birthday's some time this month, isn't it?"

"Dunno. Mine's October nineteen and you got to give me somethin' decent this year—a pair o' cuff buttons with snap-pers. I don't want any more handkerchiefs. What tree are you up now?"

Jessie clapped her hands with a giggle and dismissed her brother summarily. "Never mind. Here's your dime. Now run along. You're too young for a Guy Fawkes."

"MOM, Mom! Hi, Mom! Looky again what I gave you. Aint it a peachy napkin-ring, sterlin' silver. You can bite on it. Honest it is, cross my heart, blood on a sailor's bones! And looky what I had 'em put on it, 'To My Dear Mother on her Birthday,' seventy-five cents uextra for the engravin'."

"Oh, Rod, can yourself. Anybody'd think none of us gave Mamma anything but you. Isn't this *tête de negre* a lovely shade, Mamma? There are three yards, and I thought you could have it made up in a Sunday waist, with lots of scraps left over, like you always want. Will and I bought you the chafing-dish together. Mary's afternoons out we can cook the dandiest things in it: chicken *à la King*, and little pigs in blankets, and—"

"Pigs in blankets!" Ma gaped. "In that thing? I guess Mary's afternoons out we're liable to go on havin' corn meal mush *à la Stover*, like we been doin'—"

The kitchen door popped open suddenly; Mary darted into the room, deposited a tissue-wrapped bundle with the little pile of gifts heaped around Ma Stover's plate on the dining-room table, and with a flustered, "This is for you, Mis' Stover, with many happy returns of the day," darted out again.

Sarah Stover undid the bundle with an important bustle that took cognizance of the probability that her faithful hand-maid was listening at the pantry key-hole. "Well, I declare! A fascinator! Now I know why Mary'd never let me come near her knittin'. I think: this is

the practicalest present of all. Now I can go out and hang up my clothes without catchin' my death o' cold. My, all these things for a poky old lady that didn't even remember it was her birthday! Roddie, your napkin-ring is fine; but I'll lend it to you most o' the time, because I'm jumpin' up from the table so much I don't never have time for a napkin any more, excepting we have company. This silk's real pretty, Jessie, but I'm so used to black and white, I don't know but I'll lay it away awhile." Ma Stover began gathering up her things. She lifted the lid of the chafing-dish dubiously. "I dunno; I've never yet het a stew-pan over a tin-cup and called it cookin', and I'm afraid I'm too old to begin now; but it'll be nice for you to make fudge in, Jessie, when you want to have Maribelle and the girls up in your room. I thank you all, though you oughtn't to have done it. Your father's the only sensible one in the fam'ly. I told him years ago that our expenses was too heavy for any nonsense on my birthday."

This was Pa Stover's cue. With a wink at his excited offspring, he drew a small white jeweler's box from his vest pocket and passed it over to his astonished marital partner, on a knife-blade.

"Oh, looky!"

"I bet it's a brass thimble."

"Aw, come out of it, Mom, and look!"

Sarah pressed the tiny snap fastener open upon a filigree brooch of turquoise and pearls. "Why, John Stover, have you took leave o' your senses! The idea! It is beautiful, and I haven't had a breast-pin since that 'namel bar Aunt Cynthia sent me for a weddin' present; but I can't ever wear this with a clear conscience, John, when we've got so many heavy expenses comin' on. The fire-pan's broke in the furnace; Roddie's bounced all the springs out o' the davenport; and next spring, if they pave the street— You couldn't take it back,—"

"Can't be done, Sally," Pa chuckled slyly. "It was bought at a discount, and they don't exchange jewelry anyway. But you can carry it with you, when we go to the poor-house."

"Listen!" Jessie perked up her ears. "There's the door-bell!"

A sudden hush descended upon the dining-room. Ma Stover finished scraping the crumbs from her place into a sauce-dish and pushed back her chair. "I'll go. I wonder if the hall gas is lit. Why can't people wait till we're through supper? Jessie, if it's those young heathen o' yours to start that talkin'-machine on the screech again—"

"Sit still, Mamma. Mary'll go."

Mary was already on her way, in an ear-to-ear grin and a white apron. The Stovers' junior immediately began "scrapping" among themselves at the top of their lungs. When Mary came back, she shut the hall door carefully and announced with importance, "It's a party to see Mis' Stover."

Ma advanced to the hall with a frown. "I s'pose that's Julia Satchett after my missionary contribution. I told her to come this week; but with all the extravagance in the fam'ly, I don't see how I'm justified—"

Her hand was on the knob. She opened the door, gave one look, slammed it with a shriek, and fell back against the mantelpiece. "Oh my land! Oh my land, the whole town's out there!"

Dilly Bayliss' hand rattled the knob. "Why, Sarah Stover, that's a nice way to welcome your friends! Come in here this minute, where we all can spat you on the back."

Will slid back the folding-doors; Jessie whipped off the ladies' wraps; and before Ma Stover had recovered her senses, the whole neighborhood was scattered through the living-rooms, from Gran'pa Dillman down to Hank Hacker. The moment Ma "came to," she flew from guest to guest with greetings and hospitable lamentations:

"Sakes o' Goshen, I don't see who could have give it away it was my birthday! Now all make yourselves at home, do. Gran'pa, you set here out o' the draft. Roddie, you and Hank run up in the attic and fetch down them cane-bottomed chairs. Scoot now! I declare, Mis' Colby, I'm ashamed bein' caught this way, with my house lookin' dirtier'n a coal-bin. Will, you get the parchesi board out o' the secretary. Mebbe someone'd like to play carroms. Here, Miss Denweiler, this stereopticon's one o' the

souvenirs we brought back from the Exposition; pull the slide out and it'll look just like you was standin' in front o' the place."

For half an hour she bustled about, making her unexpected guests comfortable, then scurried upstairs to dab some cologne on her handkerchief and prod her husband. "John Stover, for the love o' Gabriel, get your tie tied, and come downstairs and help me! What'll I ever do with them people? They're sittin' there already like a bump on a log. Jennie Colby's right next to Mis' Flackman, and they haint spoken since a week ago last Thursday Jennie saw Mis' Flackman buyin' snuff in the drug-store and up and asked her, 'Do you take it or have you got something live in your house?' Deacon Stambaugh's begun fightin' with Abner Klein about the war. They wont any of 'em play them parlor games. And now, to cap the climax, Jessie's troop's just hove in, reignin' like Babel."

"Well, now, Mother,"—John Stover's even tones fell like a fire-extinguisher on a budding blaze, only to empty themselves with a sizzle the next moment: "Dang that boy o' mine! I'll trounce him around good to-morrow. He's went and stole the buttons to my white vest."

"Well, you string your belt and hurry down and help me."

Ma pattered back to the parlor. A moment of frigid silence reigned. The original warmth of the surprise party had congealed into the zero of small-town conventionality. Self-conscious males hitched down unaccustomed cuffs; self-conscious females stifled incipient coughs with their best lace handkerchiefs. Pembina's South Side had fallen a victim to manners.

Mrs. Flackman spoke up bravely. "I shouldn't wonder if it'd come off fair to-morrow."

A stray voice: "The paper said showers."

"Then it *will* be fair!"

Polite titter.

Silence largo.

Another voice: "Well, I hope it'll be one thing or the other. Anything a person hates is these days it lights and shuts all the time."

Silence staccato.

Ma Stover rushed to the dining-room door in desperation. Jessie's "troupe" were gathered about the dining-table playing "rum" with their lungs and a deck of "old maid" cards. Ma cleared her voice desperately.

"Rum!"

"Rum!!"

"I said it first."

"You didn't."

"I did."

"Ahmmm. Jessie, dear, mebbe some o' your young friends could speak us a piece, or something—just to kind o' vary the evenin'."

"Why, Mamma, they'd love to, I'm sure; but I don't think any of 'em know anything."

"I thought perhaps that piece Harvey spoke at the church entertainment—"

"Can you, Harve? She means 'The Polish Boy.'"

"Oh, I couldn't, really. I'm not up on it any more."

"Well then, perhaps Maribelle would—"

"Oh, Mrs. Stover, please don't ask me! I only know one silly little piece about a girl and a custard pie. And before all those people—I'd just die!"

Sarah turned back into the icy zone of the parlor again.

Silence forte.

Dilly Bayliss to the rescue: "Isn't that an elegant pansy plaque above the sofa?"

Quartette of assents.

"I always think a plaque is the nicest thing a person can paint. So tasty. And you can always use it for a card receiver, too."

Hectic duo of assents.

"Excuse me, Deacon, but your rocker'll ketch in that what-not before long."

Blush and hasty move by the Deacon.

Epidemic of coughing.

Wild laughter from the dining-room.

Voice with unconscious accent: "They seem to be having a grand time out there."

Hostess again at the folding-door, the reins of destiny in her hands—unable, however, to meet her daughter's innocent eyes. "Jessie, perhaps your company



could spare you long enough, or Will, to come in and—er—play us a piece on your talkin'-machine."

"Oh, Mamma, I don't think they'd care to hear it, really? It's so screechy, you said—"

"Now Jessie, you do as your mother tells you."

"But Mamma—"

Dilly Bayliss, straining an attentive ear, caught the gist and let out a delighted gurgle. "*Do*, Miss Jessie. We're all just crazy to hear it—that Shannon River piece, and we'll find out, Sarah, if they don't think it sounds too like poor Eddie Beakler for anything!"

They did. The party began to develop signs of life. A venturesome voice inquired: "Aint there a record on the other side?" There was. It provoked polite applause. Chairs were hitched nearer. Jessie put "Old Black Joe" on the turn-table.

A chorus of "Oh's!"

Gran'pa Dillman in reminiscent tears: "I aint been so teched in a long spell."

"I declare to goodness, it re-

minds me of singin' school when I was a girl."

"What next?"

"Something lively?"

"I don't suppose you've got a jig-tune?"

"Why, Paw, aint you ashamed o' yourself!"

Jessie went on the job with a lively two-step and a guileless smile.

"Gor-ry! Aint there a swing to it—I want to know!"

"Just like the Military Band was playin' it downtown in the park."

"Let's have it over."

Shuffling of feet on the carpet.

"Don't it remind you, Jennie, of the dances we used to have in the old Miller House?"

"Oh, hush yourself. I never really danced; that is, I—"

"You did so, Jenny Colby. You was the best schottischer at them balls."

"Oh, hush yourself. What'll Mis' Stover think!"

"Shucks, y o u couldn't dance to this piece she's playin', anyway. It's too fast."

"Ah, hah, Abner, how d'you know so much about dancing?"

The young fry had come in and gathered



"Deacon Stambaugh's begun fightin' with Abner Klein about the war."

around the machine. Maribelle passed Jessie a fresh disc.

Sarah Stover pricked her ears and demanded sternly, "Why, Jessie, I never heard that record before!"

"It isn't ours, Mamma. It's one of Maribelle Colby's brother-in-law's we borrowed to play the other night. They use them for dancing at his house."

A hopeful voice: "It is slower."

"Abner, leave off patten' your feet. You'll have Mis' Stover's art-square all napped up."

Will nudged Jessie. She wound her spring and ran the record over.

"By Harry, if it don't sound just like the piece we used to have the grand march to at the Miller House!"

"Oh, a grand march! Wouldn't it—"

"A grand march, heh?" Pa Stover sprang up gallantly. "What's the matter with a grand march in honor of Sally's birthday!"

General suspension of breath, followed by a squeal from Dilly. "Oh, goody! Sarah, you first, and the rest of us—"

"Oh, my land! Oh my land, Dilly, I can't never do no such a thing! I never danced a step in my life. John Stover—"

"Well, you don't have to dance. Just keep time to the music and hang onto your partner."

All present suddenly on their feet.

"Aw, come on, Mis' Stover."

"Really, there aint any harm."

"Here Dilly, you and Mr. Stover lead, and Mis' Stover can follow with your husband."

A dozen willing hands dragged Ma, protesting, to the floor.

"Come on now; everybody fall in."

"Here, no fair walkin' with your own husband!"

"Hold on. Mis' Flackman's tripped on the carpet."

Pa Stover to the rescue. "Will! Harvey! You boys roll up the rugs, so 't—"

"Why, John Stover, people'll think we're givin' a dance!"

"Nonsense! We can step it better on the varnish."

They're off! Pa Stover and Dilly Bayliss tore twenty years right out of the calendar. Certainly some cut-ups!

What a racket! Through the hall, round the dining-room table, back to the parlors. Serpentine wind-up now, now unwind, single file, grand right and left. Be careful when you cross over. Roddie and Hank Hacker brought up the rear. Maribelle was taking a shift at the cranking now.

On the fourth round, Sarah slipped into the kitchen. "For the love o' Goshen, Mary! All these folks on my hands and nothing in the house to offer 'em but doughnuts and cider. And I'm afraid the cider's worked."

Mary giggled and made a shoo with her apron. "You run right back in now, Mis' Stover."

"I dunno—mebbe we'd better have coffee with the doughnuts. Why, what's that in the corner?"

Without bursting, Mary could contain herself no longer. She tore off a strip of carpet from two ice-cream freezers and lifted a napkin from a sumptuous loaf of White Mountain cake. "Mister ordered two gallons o' tooty-frooty, and I baked this here 'fore you-all was out o' bed this mornin'. Now you got to run on back in there, Mis' Stover, or Miss Jessie'll give me fits."

Jessie kept an astute eye on the kitchen door. When her mother returned to the front of the house, she found the grand march had suspended in a gale of fans and hilarity; and—shades of drawn curtains!—Jessie's redoubtable "troupe" was tripping it to the measures of a waltz. A frown blew up like a mountain cloud on her relaxed brow. She had already advanced halfway across the room to stop the music, when her stern eye perceived that three or four couples of the older guests were rehashing a nimble acquaintance with Terpsichore. She paused a moment, undecided between principle and hospitality—and was lost.

Quiet Mrs. Flackman sidled up to her eagerly. "Oh, Mis' Stover, aint we havin' just the grandest time? It don't seem like I've been to no place in ten years where I felt I was part of it like I do to-night!"

"Are them talkin'-machines awful expensive?" put in Ada Klein. "Abner says I should ask you, though we



couldn't afford one this winter anyway. I feel all nervoused up, just's if I'd been listenin' to a concert at the Op'ra House."

Up pranced Dilly. "Sarah Stover, aint you got one mite o' jealousy in you! Your man's been beau-in' me around all evenin'."

"Maribelle, stop that romping. If you can't dance like 'a lady, Mamma wont let you dance at all." Jennie Colby's reproving glance was an ignominious failure. She joined the group about Sarah, her work-stained fingers folded tightly across her black surah. "Aint the young folks just havin' the beatenest time! Maribelle's always teasin' to come over here, Mis' Stover. She says Jessie says, 'There aint nothing in our house too good to use!' and that's one reason why they like it. I think it's just like the parson said, calling at our place last week: children are better off if their parents allow 'em every legitimit amusement in their own homes, than if they're chasin' about to Social Clubs in hired halls and runnin' to picture shows with Tom, Dick, and Harry. And now the fam'ly magazines have took up dancin', I don't feel squeamish like I used to. Maribelle, don't hop so, dear! Really, Mis' Stover, you must let a parcel of us ladies run in to-morrow and help you iron your floors over, or I'll feel guilty, lettin' my children scratch 'em so."

Sarah tore herself away from these compliments and drew Jessie into a whispered conference. "There's two gallons of expensive ice-cream in the kitchen, young lady. I don't know who's responsible for it; but I s'pose it's got to be et up. Don't you think it's about time to serve? Gran'pa's fell asleep and Dilly Bayliss'll have the hysterics in another ten minutes, the way she's carryin' on. You tell Mary we're ready, then run up in my bedroom and get them new napkins your Aunt Cynthia hemmed me, out of the trunk-tray."

Ma marched beaming through the rooms, dispensing her best company manners everywhere. "Now folks, set down everybody, right where you are. We're goin' to pass a bite to eat."

The party gathered in sociable

groups, investigating the ice-cream. In one corner Sarah and Mrs. Flackman planned a Ladies' Aid "rummage;" in another, Abner and the Deacon helped each other to second pieces of cake and agreed that right would triumph in the war, under whoso's banner be; Jessie's "push" retired to the dining-room, within easy reach of the freezers; Dilly confided to Pa Stover that, after a lesson off from the pictures in the *Ladies' Fireside Companion*, she'd be willing to take a chance on the Hesitation. The talking-machine ground out "Too Much Mustard!" unreprieved.

Conversation achieved an intimate tone.

"This is the loveliest ice-cream I ever et. It seems like it has a peculiar flavor I aint familiar with."

"My goodness, do they keep a hired-girl all the time, or is that fat one passin' the cake, only in for the evenin'?"

"Look at the breast-pin Sarah's wearin'. You needn't to tell me John Stover aint makin' money!"

"It's in the *Sentinel* to-night he's got the contract for the new Grammar School."

"Next thing you know they'll be movin' over the river with the haughty mongde."

"This is elegant ice-cream."

In a momentary lull the Larkin-onyx clock on the mantelpiece struck eleven. A guilty titter ensued and a general rustling for wraps.

"Goodness sakes, I've got my sponge to set yet!"

"And I'm goin' to wash curtains to-morrow!"

"Somebody wake Gran'pa."

"Deacon, I'm goin' to have you up afore the elders, rarin' around at all scand'lous hours."

"It aint late!" protested Ma Stover. "Don't rush off like a house afire."

They assembled at the door with a volley of farewell birthday wishes and congratulations on the evening.

"Good-night, Mis' Stover. Many happy returns!"

"Aint we had a scrumptious time! Somebody ought to put a piece in the *Sentinel*."

"Who says there aint no society on the South Side?"

"Aint I terrible bold, Mis' Stover—but couldn't we have another recital on your talkin'-machine sometime?"

"Wouldn't it go fine, with hymns, for a cottage prayer meeting?"

"Come on, Dilly. I bet that giddy's in there learnin' the Hesitation. Come on, Dilly, Mis' Colby's runnin' off with your beau!"

"Good-night, Sarah."

"Good-night, all."

THE moment the door closed on the last surpiser, Pa Stover let out a yip, made a dash for his consort, grabbed her about the basque, and trotted her down the front hall like a young race horse. "What's the matter with our house, Sally?" he cried. "I guess we can give an ee-light party along with the best of 'em! Who says Stovers aint busted into society?"

"John Stover, let me go this instant! What do you think I am, one o' them Salomey's? Haint you got any shame, kissin' me before the whole fam'ly?"

In a second Ma had wiped off the proud smile that fought for possession of her competent countenance, composed her basque and her blushes, and jammed down the helm of the Stover barge of state. "Oh my land, didn't it give me a start when they first come! I hope nobody wasn't offended. This house looks like a cyclone'd struck it. We can't ever go to bed in such a bedlam. Will, you and your pa put down the rugs; Jessie, you help Mary—your cake was just elegant, Mary, creamy to melt in your mouth—pick up the dishes, and I'll straighten things around and count the napkins. Who asked you, Jessie, to go about tellin' the neighbors there aint nothing in Stover's house too good to use? I don't know if I should take it for a compliment or an insult. Mercy, I'll bet there's gas-jets burnin' in every room on the premises. We'll be in the county-farm earlier'n we're due. Roddie, you chase round and begin turnin' 'em off."

A half hour later the pension de Stover had been restored to its usual immaculate condition, and the family

were gathered about Ma's dining-room chair like a court-room crowd awaiting the judge's verdict. "Well, now," she demanded, with an effort to look her sternest, "I want to know who's at the bottom of all this piece o' foolishness."

A non-committal smile ran around the council.

"You don't need to tell *me*! It started in this house, because I found Jessie's bed spread up with a bolster; and Mary had the cakes baked this morning before we were up; she said so herself."

"Hi, Mom!" Rod sprang lustily into the breach. "Hi, Mom, we're all in it, honest to cats in a cannibal stew, we are. We all been conspirin' for a week. Now what you goin' to do? Jessie asked me a long time ago when's Mom's birthday, and the next I heard of it Pop and Will was gassin' and Will says let's buy her a new talkin'-machine for a present, and Pop says, 'Wait awhile; that's comin' it too strong,' and I perty near busted to tell you. Will says if I do he'll stuff castor oil and cotton down my throat. I aint afraid o' him; he's a big stiff. Me and Hank can lick him if he is my brother. But I didn't tell 'cause Jess promised me a pair o' cuff buttons with snappers on. Now you got to get 'em, Jess! They made me go round to the houses and say don't bring any presents and meet at Mis' Bayliss' at six-thirty. What do you think, Mom, yesterday I heard Pop callin' up the bakery about the ice-cream and the girl says what kind do you want, and Pop, he says, tooty-frooty. She says, 'Ahem, mebbe you don't want that flavor if it's for a fam'ly party—we put brandy in.' And Pop says, 'What do you mean? Go ahead; nothin'g's too good for my wife's birthday!' Listen, Mom, what I heard to-night; Mis' Abner Klein and another old girl was standin' by the mantel, and she reached up and rubbed her hand over the top o' your ornyx clock and says, 'There, what did I tell you? I bet she don't dust her rooms oftener'n once in two weeks.' An'—"

"Rodman, shut your chatter! I guess my house is cleaner'n Mis' Abner Klein's ever thought of bein'."

"Oh, well now, Mother," Pa put in mildly, "never you mind her. Every-



Pa Stover and Dilly Bayliss tore twenty years right out of the calendar. What a racket! Through the hall, round the dining-room table, back to the parlor.

thing went off spick and spandy. We'll have a reputation for bein' real fancy folks after to-night. I've wrote a little piece about it for the paper, so you can send it to some o' them tony cousins o' yours down East and show 'em they've got nothing on us for bein' in society. Listen, everybody, how it sounds." Pa gave his glasses a pat, whipped out a sheet of tablet paper, and intoned complacently:

"Last evening Mrs. John Stover, of 47 Sycamore Street, was pleasantly surprised by a party of about thirty South Side friends and neighbors, the occasion being the anniversary of her birthday. After heartfelt congratulations on the event, the evening was delightfully passed in social converse, music, and parlor pastimes. At ten o'clock an elegant collation was served. The guests departed at a late hour, voting the affair one of the most enjoyable of the early social season."

"There, Mother, aint that done up in regular reporter style?"

"Why, John Stover!" Ma gasped. "Give me that sheet o' paper this instant! I've lived half o' my life in Pembina without newspaper notoriety and I guess I can rest. Who cares whether I'm havin' a party or a funeral? Besides, everyone'll think I put it in just to—"

"No they wont, Mamma," cut in Jessie. "They'll think one of the guests wrote it. And it's too late now; Father's already telephoned it to the editor. It'll be in the 'Social Whirl' column tomorrow, and we'll just cut it out and send it to Cousin Dora and Cousin Marie. I'm awfully sorry, Mamma,"—Jessie sugared her voice with a frosting of guileless sympathy,—"that we had to use the talking-machine to-night to entertain your party, when I know you don't like it."

Sarah Stover finished counting her best spoons, tucked them tidily in their chamois case, and got up. "Come now, we've got to get to bed, or we'll all be wrunger'n a limp dish-rag in the mornin'. I dunno as it will hurt my Cousin Dora any to know that I don't live in a

brush-heap. O' course I'm 'most tickled to death with all these presents and doin's, but I s'pose you know, every last one of you, what I think: I think the money might better of been spent payin' our bills. I'd like to know who's runnin' this fam'ly, anyway! Dancin' in my own house, and to a talkin'-machine, when I've always said—"

"But Mamma, all the curtains were up, and the grown-ups began it as soon as we did, and you heard what Mis' Colby said the minister said, and we wont ever do any of those extreme dances, will we, Will?"

"Well, I s'pose if the parson cottons to it and an old straightlace like Jenny Colby stands up for it, I'd oughtn't to hang out for a Prudy-prim. But mind, young lady, only parlor dances for you,"—Will and Jessie exchanged triumphant winks,—"and I may set my foot down on that yet! Roddie, you let that freezer alone before you get the colic. John Stover, aint you ashamed, introducin' your infant son to liquor under your own roof! It's my opinion we're all goin' to pot, the whole Stover kit and caboodle. Will, see't the kitchen door's locked, and Pa, for goodness' sake, turn out all these lights."

Ma shunted into the sitting-room for a final look around. "Jessie, hadn't you better put the cover on your talkin'-machine? It didn't sound so screechy to-night, like it does sometimes. It was kind o' handy, havin' it to fall back on. I dunno, if them folks come in on me for a recital the way they said, mebbe I'll have to have that waist you give me, made up. A body don't always like to appear in the same costume. But I sha'n't encourage 'em. What fun'll it be for 'em, listenin' to them same discs over again? Your pa and Will act like all possessed, talkin' about gettin' a new instrument. I can tell 'em now what I think of it; but if they're bound to, anyway, why, they better buy one in mahogany that looks like a regular piece o' furniture with them slats and a cupboard for the records. Come now, upstairs everybody! I never see such a tribe for dawdlin' to their beds."

## The Previous Chapters of "EMPTY POCKETS"

**R**UPERT HUGHES tells this great human story just as it would come to us in life. First he gives a tragedy and its incidents, much as would our morning paper, and then he unravels the events which led up to it.

Merry Perry Merithew, a well-born, profligate millionaire of New York, is found dead on the roof of a lowly East Side tenement, grasping in his stained hands eight long strands of copper-colored hair. The only other clue is a hatpin of peculiar design lying near by. Immediately, search is started for the woman whose hair would match those incriminating strands. Hallard, a reporter who knows Merry Perry's record, makes straight for Aphra Shaler, a recipient of Perry's princely support. He finds her fleeing, her copper hair bleached to ash. She flings behind her the retort, "Look up Muriel Schuyler. He liked her, and she has copper-colored wool."

And with that begins the story of the effect of the dead roué's life on the foul and the fair, the rich and the poor, during the year before its tragic end.

**M**URIEL SCHUYLER, a beautiful, unspoiled young aristocrat, met Merry Perry in her father's office, where she went to ask for five thousand dollars with which to ransom a kidnaped Italian child. Merry Perry was there to borrow to pay a blackmailer. Muriel's father refused both. Muriel was heartbroken, and when Merry Perry called her up later and told her he would give her that five thousand, if she would meet him at the yacht club and give him one dance, Muriel accepted. She was seen receiving the money by "Pet" Bettany, a gossip-loving dangler on the edge of society. Unconscious of danger, Muriel proceeded toward ransoming the child, with the help of a poor young physician, Dr. Clinton Worthing.

Dr. Worthing had made a real impression on Muriel by coming into her life when her automobile hit a crippled newsboy, Happy Hanigan. A mob attacked Muriel, and her head had been gashed. Dr. Worthing dressed Muriel's wound and prepared his heart to fulfill her commands. Her first was to get the best surgeon to straighten poor Happy's twisted body; her second, to aid her in keeping a poor Jewish girl from being deported to Russia; the third, to help get back to his mother the kidnaped boy.

Muriel also helped Maryla Sokalska, a beautiful — and copper haired — Polish girl, by obtaining for her a position as model at a fashionable dressmaker's. There Merry Perry saw Maryla — and Muriel's well-meant charity ended in Merry Perry's placing the ignorant Maryla on his bounty roll.

Muriel went with the ransom money to the tenement home of the boy's parents. Red Ida, a pickpocket and singer, and her husband, "Shang" Ganley, a gunman, recognized Muriel from newspaper pictures, and lured her to a deserted building where she was gagged, bound and held prisoner by Ganley and his pals.

Meantime, Red Ida went up town to sing at a restaurant, and Dr. Worthing hunted for Muriel. Red Ida, afraid of consequences, got a chance to dance with Perry Merithew, when she saw him in the restaurant, and told him of Muriel's abduction and where in the suburbs she was to be taken that night. Merithew immediately picked up a detective and motored thither.

At midnight Dr. Worthing recognized Muriel being thrust into a taxi. He followed in another. In a wild race across the city, the fleeing taxi eluded police and all, gained its lonely suburban destination — and ran squarely into Merithew and his detective. Muriel was taken from her captors and the gunmen held up.

**W**HEN Muriel found her rescuer was Merithew, she knew her name would be linked with the profligate's, and her gratitude to him was curt. But her aloofness made her all the more desirable in Merithew's eyes, and his anxiety to please her made him careful to keep his connection with the rescue as quiet as she could wish. He gave "Red Ida," who had betrayed her husband-kidnaped, enough money to stay out of New York, decided to send poor, ignorant Maryla adrift, drop his unsavory past, force his wife to divorce him, and try for Muriel's hand. But he had forgotten Pet Bettany, who had been with him when he had started on the hunt for Muriel. Pet demanded hush money. And Muriel, unconscious of it all, ran away with her parents to Europe for a time. She had come to realize that she was greatly interested in Dr. Worthing, and that enraptured young man promised to take care of her poor folk, while she was gone.





# EMPTY

THE NOVEL OF NEW YORK WHICH

By Rupert Hughes

Author of "What Will People Say?" etc.

Winnie Nicolls would carry to his grave the scar Muriel had given him at polo, but he insisted his heart was deeper bruised by her careless beauty.

## CHAPTER XXXI

**T**HE latest commodity in Perry Merithew's serial seraglio was basking like a sultana on a moonlit window-seat — the ninth window-seat, counting vertically, in an apartment on the upper extreme of Central Park West.

She was coiled and extended, and contented as a cobra full of warm milk. On the knuckle-dimples of her soft clasped hands her softer chin reposed. Her hair poured down along her cheeks and about her shoulders like a thick syrup, giving the back of her head an ophidian flatness.

By thrusting her chin forward a little, Maryla could look straight down the

windowed precipice to the street. But she preferred to stare drowsily into the polite wilderness of Central Park; for when she looked down, she was filled with terror lest she yield to those mysterious hands that press the shoulder-blades of people in high places, with a satanic temptation to step off.

Maryla's soul had yielded to such an urge, but her body was afraid of it. Her soul had stepped off the lofty if bleak promontory of the poor but honest, and ceased to be both at the same time. But she had felt no crash of ruin, as she had been warned she would if ever she "fell." The wings the tempter promised had indeed borne her up.

Part of Maryla's mind was telling her how wicked she was to leave that noble crag of innocence forever. Part of her mind was telling her how foolish she would have been not to.

She had lost the high privilege of being the virtuous daughter of the half-starved Sokalskis. Her poor father had helplessly rewarded and honored her obedience with unending toil at a sewing machine, with harsh words, poor food, coarse clothes, and no diversions and no patience for the love of beauty and fine raiment and amorous exploration that youth finds necessary.

Perry Merithew had insulted her with luxuries, with flowers, jewels, plumes, fashionable gowns, courtship, excursions, and a servant.

He had left her to dine alone to-night, but she dined well upon chicken roasted by a Virginienne and upon sweet potatoes grilled and upon imported ice cream from the caterer's. There is a sufficing companionship in good food, pleasantly served. And now there was luxury in



# POCKETS

EVERY AMERICAN WILL WANT TO READ

Illustrated by  
James Montgomery Flagg

reclining at her ease and watching the huge gilt moon dwindle and silver as it climbed. There was a kind of conversation in the amiable breeze lifting her hair as with a lover's fingers, and fluttering the silken tissue of her peignoir.

She was so completely cosy that she blessed the name of her destroyer, and mused that if this it was to be ruined, how false were the pretences of integrity.

The late sewing-machinist could hardly believe that she was not dreaming. To make sure that she was awake she struck her palms on the rough stone of the window-sill, and clutched in her fingers the string of imitation pearls Perry had given her. She ran the pearls through her fingers like a kind of infernal rosary.

The only flaw in her contentment was Perry's absence. He was away from her most of the time. At first she had been so glad of idleness after her youth-long labor, that she had never complained to him of his neglect. She had made an industry of telling over to herself the things she had escaped, and of appreciating the things she had gained, including the furniture, the rugs, the pictures. She did not know enough to know how tawdry they were.

But latterly she had begun to miss Perry when he was away. She hardly knew his name, and it meant to her nothing of what it meant to other New Yorkers. She had not dreamed that he was married. She supposed him rich, and he told her nothing of his financial worries or his other entanglements. She had not annoyed him with exactions as Aphra Shaler had done. She knew nothing of the brevity of such alliances, as Aphra Shaler did.

The difficulties of courting the future Mrs. Merithew under the lorgnon of the present Mrs. Merithew were too severe even for Merry Perry's advanced technic.



Last night Perry had taken her to the gaudy restaurant where the funny little red-headed woman sang. He had left Maryla and danced with that girl, and had sat at her table so absorbed in what he was being told, that Maryla felt herself in the way.

She was bitterly hurt till she reminded herself that she had no right to jealousy and must not begin to demand just because he had begun to be gracious. She had resolved never to be an incumbrance on the kind gentleman. So she had slipped away, and walked back to the nest he had established her in. If he wanted to see her, he knew where he had put her.

He did not follow her and she felt that she had done the right thing by her benefactor. She could not have imagined that Perry was learning from Red Ida how Muriel Schuyler had been kidnapped; she could not have dreamed that Perry had gone to Muriel's rescue. It never occurred to her that Perry knew Muriel. No premonition told her that it was from Muriel and not from Red Ida that her danger arose.

The day had gone by with its flock of hours, one after one. Maryla did not read the papers. She knew nothing of Muriel's sensational appearance in the headlines. Perry had sent no word, no flowers, no box of candy. Maryla was rebuking herself for a hint of resentment. This was heinous ingratitude. Yet she was amazed at the new strength of loneliness that gnawed at her.

She heard a motor-horn, but it was not Perry's car. She uncoiled and stretched and yawned with all her might and with thoroughness. She walked about the apartment, luxuriating in it. It was all Eden in four rooms and a bath. She rubbed a velvety portière against her cheek. She stroked the glossy upholstery of the best chair. She snapped the electric lights on and off; they were a new toy. She patted the little piano as if it were a pony. She tried to poke out a tune with one finger—the tune that Red Ida had sung, the one called, "Treat Her Like a Baby." She fell into ludicrous blunders that made her laugh. Then she stumbled into an ancient Jewish melody that made her sad. She tried to sing it, but the index-finger accompaniment jarred her voice off the notes. She quit the piano and paced the floor with shut eyes, chanting like another Miriam.

By and by she was aware that some one was near. She stopped short and turning saw the black face and shining eyes of the cook Perry had installed for her.

"Oh, it's you, Martha. I did not hear you."

"But Ah hud you, honey. Ah was listenin' at you wif bofe years. Keep right awn singin'; it's a beautiful sawng. But say, what dat langwidge you sing?—Ahrish?"

"No, no; it is old Hebrew song: '*Sholem Aleichem*.' It means 'Peace be

with you.' At home we did sing it Sabbath, in the eveninks when we have been by the temple. My father did sing and all the whole femmily." She sighed. "I shall not be by my home on New Year's Day."

"How can you tell, chile? New Year's aint doo fo' fo' months."

"Our New Year's comes very soon—our Yom Kippur. I did buy post carts already to send my people. Look."

She ran to fetch a batch of pasteboard atrocities. It was wonderful that anything could be made so ugly for so little money.

One of the cards framed a bit of white silk on which a cluster of dismal flowers was embroidered in uncongenial colors, over a Hebrew motto worked in lavender. On another was a gold wheelbarrow loaded with pansies as big as the wheel and with huge forget-me-nots in blue-green and purple, not to mention two highly embossed white birds sprinkled with gilt tinsel.

The cards delighted Martha's Ethiopian ideals of art, and Maryla's untrained sense of grandeur.

The simplest of the cards contained a spray of violets and a greeting in Hebrew with these graceful verses in English:

Sorry I'm not with you to-day  
To utter my New Year's Greetings;  
But hope ere twelve months pass away,  
You and I will be meeting.

Maryla read this very dubious compliment as if it were a classic ode, and tears scurried from her eyes unexpectedly, and spattered the cards. She was in a flurry to dry them with her handkerchief lest they stain and spoil the design.

Maryla smiled to think how ecstatically her mother and her little fat sister Dosia would shriek over these beautiful things. She had not been home since she left off working at Dutilh's. She had not dared to go home and confront her father's eyes. She knew that in his eyes the beauty of her life would be hideous. He was very strict. But she had sent many presents home; things to wear, to eat, to adorn oneself with—and not only to her mother and sister, but to her father too. These gifts were atonements,

peace-offerings against the day she should venture back.

When her conscience revolted against her contentment, the best anæsthetic she could find for it was the fact that her wickedness enabled her to send into that doleful home of hers, things of beauty that otherwise would be unknown there. She used the word "*wickedness*" in imaginary quotation marks, for she could not see anything harsh or hateful in the gentle graces of her new life.

The door bell rang. It startled her. It would not be Perry, for he had his own key. A wild thought thrilled her that it might be her father come to punish her, to destroy her for her offence against him. She had sent her address with her last budget of gifts, hoping to get back a letter of thanks at least. What if she had brought his wrath about her head? She was afraid of him with the loving terror of a dog.

Martha answered the bell and shuffled back to say:

"It's a—a ge'man—well, not 'zackly a ge'man neither. He allowed his name was—er—er—somefin endin' in 'insky.'"

"Not Balinsky? or Pasinsky?"

"I d'know, honey. All dem 'inskies' soun' alike to me."

"Well, esk him he should come in."

Maryla stole behind one of the curtains and watched with amused amazement the entrance of the family's lone star boarder. Pasinsky edged in timidly and stared about the little flat as if it were a great hotel. Finding himself alone, he took a portière in his hands, folded it and expertly snapped it to test its fabric. He carried on one arm one of the black leather market-bags they use in Allen Street. It was bulging full.

## II

MARYLA was so flattered by the awe on Pasinsky's face that she giggled and betrayed her hiding-place. Pasinsky scraped off his derby hat with humility. She ran out and caught both of his hands in hers, babbling:

"Oh, but I am gled to see you, Henryk. How you are? You have been well? And how is Mother? and little Dosia, is she happy? And Papa, still

well? And Grandfadder, does he cough yet? Oh, it is so good to see somebody! You are the only one I see since—since I did go away. The canary bird sings good, yes? Did they get the money I did send? What did they buy? Dosia, did she like the pretty dress, and the hair ribbons?"

She stopped laughing when she saw how pitiful was his smile, and how big the tears were in his eyes.

"You don't speak, Henryk?"

"Ach Maryla, you esk so many kvestions. I have only one to esk. Are you—was you—heppy?"

"Happy? I am in heaven. Sit down once." She motioned him to a chair and flung herself on the window seat with such carelessness that one of her slippers fell off. Pasinsky bent to pick it up, but she checked him with a gesture. Then she pressed a button in the wall, and in a moment Martha was at the door:

"Did you ring, missy?"

"Yes," said Maryla with a majestic yawn, "peeck up my sleeper, pleasee."

"Yassum," said Martha, wondering at the improvement in Maryla's mind. She was chuckling like a brook as she fitted the slipper on Maryla's foot. Then Maryla motioned her out imperiously, and Martha backed away like a slave of Cleopatra's, except for her chuckles. She understood that Maryla was trying to impress her visitor, and she was in perfect sympathy.

"You see!" Maryla said with the manner of a boastful child. "And you ask am I happy!"

"It is not the same like your own home," Pasinsky mumbled.

"I should say not. But isn't it fi-ine? But yet, Henryk, believe me, sometimes I get such a homesickness I want to go back. Honest! Would you believe me?"

"If only you did never vent away!" he sighed.

She caught his meaning, and the red flashed up her throat and over her cheeks so hotly that it seemed to blind her. She changed the subject at once: "What it is you got in thet beg: presents for me?"

This threw him in a panic, and he said: "Presents I got. Yes, I got presents for you."



"Unly fair to me!" Maryla echoed with a sick smile. She wanted to scream. She wanted to attack Merithew in a wrath. She had only her pride to govern her swirl of thoughts, and her pride commanded her to take no charity from this



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLACC

frenzy of hate—or of love; she could not tell which. But she was slow in everything; serene in sin and demure in her first man, to quit on equal terms. She set her chin high on a tortured throat and said: "Don't worry about me. I go! I go!"



She ran and seizing the bag opened it and poured on the floor the gifts she had sent home, all of them, even the money. She sank down by them, and now a snow-white blush overran her face even to the lips.

"My presents! my presents!" she moaned. "But for why?"

"I don't want to told you."

"Yes, yes, you got to."

"Vell, he says—your fadder—not me; I dun't said it—your fadder says you did buyed dese t'inks vit de vages of—of—"

"Sin?" she groaned that hateful word—that other people's word.

Pasinsky nodded and turned his eyes away as from nakedness. And indeed she felt stripped of her fine raiment and fallen in a heap. The floor where she huddled was the foot of the cliff. The upholding wings of Lucifer had closed beneath her and let her crash. She was so despicable that her gifts were insults; her atonements were swept from the altar with disdain.

Pasinsky made haste to finish his dismal business. He spoke as if he were the guilty one making the confession, instead of the herald of the condemning judge:

"I dun't like sayink it, Maryla—you know I dun't like; but your fadder makes me promise to told you, how de Sokalskis dey are poor and voik hart, and are grindet into de dost, but not yet—not yet vill dey take moneysh from de—he says—de shame of a daughter of Israel."

MARYLA took the judgment upon her bent neck. There was nothing to answer that her father or his messenger could understand. Men did not need pretty things and caresses, and tenderness, especially not such men as her father, who found his luxury in economy, made a revel over a penny saved, and a funeral over anything it bought. She could not understand the glory of the malekind that tries to make and keep a home, not only for to-day's comfort but against to-morrow's menace; the spirit that takes pride in thrift, and finds more beauty in rags that are receipted for than in mortgaged silks that belong to some cheated creditor.

Maryla stared at the rejected heap of

graces for which she had exchanged the little ugly handful of bills and coins that Perry Merithew had tossed on the table for her to squander.

Her idle hand lifted a gorgeous waist she had bought for her mother; a coquettish hat for Dosia with a joyous feather on it; a wheel of scarlet ribbon for Dosia's hair. Her only answer to Pasinsky's death warrant was at last a sorrowful question:

"Papa had a right to leave poor *Mütterchen* her waist—and Dosia—what did Dosia say?"

"It was soch a cryink dey say not moch."

Maryla stared at the spoils of her dalliance and sighed:

"It is so ogly to be poor. It is so shameful ogly to be poor!"

After a time she asked, without looking up:

"Henryk, do you—do you think of me what my fadder thinks?"

Pasinsky spun his hideous derby round and round as he answered:

"Maryla, I am all the time dreamink. Your fadder says I am a loafer, but me, I want it all people should be heppy and have deir vish, and make always laughink. Sometimes I t'ink I dun't care how somebody gets a heppiness chost so dey got it—and more as everybody in de voilt it iss you, Maryla, I want it should got a heppiness."

She raised brimming eyes of gratitude. He was a Perry Merithew in shoddy, the woman-idolator that goes proudly bankrupt to prettify pretty creatures, and takes his pay in their increased prestige and their selfish enhancement.

"You are heppy—yes?"

"I was," she sighed.

"He loafs you?"

Blushes were set in her cheeks like sudden roses, and the shame that cast her eyes down was a delicious shame. She nodded. Pasinsky asked the question that changed the roses to another red and weighted the eyelids heavier.

"For why dun't you marry your-sellufs?"

It was a question Maryla had often asked her own heart, but never her lover. There was a sacredness about her happiness that made it honest to her, and she



longed for Perry to make it honest to the world. He had told her that they would live as "Mr. and Mrs. Brown" for the present. This spurious title was all he had granted her, and it was for the janitor's sake. But her bliss was too terribly great to imperil by any demands. She had cherished a foolish trust that if she were devoted enough and patient and cheerful enough she might make herself indispensable to Perry. Pasinsky's question was inopportune, premature, inconvenient, and therefore impertinent. She resented it with the swift anger of guilt; and rose against him:

"For why do you thenk we are not married?"

Pasinsky felt sorry that she should have to try to lie out of it: he shook his head mercifully:

"Ach, Maryla, Maryla! you should to come home once!"

He took her hands in his, and his tolerance broke her. He was all the family she had. She went into his arms and wept.

There Perry Merithew found her when he let himself in with his latchkey. They did not hear him. He stared at them in anger, then in a more insulting amusement. Seeing what manner of man Pasinsky was, the exquisite Perry realized the quality of Maryla's origin. He sneered less at her than at himself. He was ashamed not of his sin, but of his partner in it.

### III

PERRY laughed softly, and Maryla, hearing him, started from Pasinsky's embrace and stared at him. Her terror lest he misunderstand and be jealous gave way to a greater terror, for she understood instantly the scornful indifference on his face. All she could say was a stammering:

"How—how do you do? You should meet Mr. Pasinsky."

Pasinsky's first glance gave him Perry's measure. He shuddered for Maryla.

Neither man offered the other his hand. Their prides were equal, unless Pasinsky's were the more contemptuous. Maryla explained:

"Mr. Pasinsky is an old friend. He lives by our house."

Perry nodded and stepped away from the door as much as to say, "Get out quietly!"

Pasinsky realized his meaning and could have killed him, if Maryla's eyes had not been so full of worship. So he obeyed, mumbling:

"I gotta go now. Goot-by, Maryla. I gotta go now. Goot-by, Meesteh—Meesteh—"

"Good-night," said Perry.

Maryla went to the door with Pasinsky. When she came back, Perry was seated in a chair with his cane athwart his crossed knees, and his hat on the back of his head. It was as if he had put up a barrier against the usual rapture of her greeting.

She closed the door and fell back against it, waiting for him to say something. He said:

"And who's all that?"

"He is a friend of my people like I told you."

Perry nodded toward the heap on the floor.

"And what's all that?"

Maryla told the truth:

"I did send home some presents to my people. My fadder would not keep them."

"And why not?"

It was not easy for her, but she confessed:

"He thinks I should not ought to be here."

To her dismay, Perry's comment was brusque:

"I agree with him."

It was like a fist against her breast. She recoiled in pain. Perry hated his task but he had found that the best way to be rid of mistresses was to ignore their sentimental torments and finish the business in a business-like way, short and sharp:

"Maryla, I've got bad news."

She hurried to a chair and sank into it as if she feared to trust her strength when the blow fell. It fell:

"Maryla, I'm going to—I've got to go abroad—to Europe." She was so distressed that he softened the blow with a compassionate lie. "I've got to go on



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

Muriel paused a moment, poised as if for flight, then came running down with both hands outstretched. It was to him as if the Winged Victory of Samothrace had come to life and hurried down the steps of the Louvre. Muriel lacked the wings, but the head and arms were a more than fair exchange. The eagerness of her welcome and the gust of her approach unsteedied him.

business. I—I'm sorry, but I've got to go—it's on business—important business. I'm sorry."

"You come soon beck?" she parleyed, knowing that the end had come.

"Er—no—not for a long time. I really don't know when—but not for some time."

She gave him every opportunity to help her: "I will wait."

"You'd better not," he went on, hating her meekness. "You can stay here till you make your plans. I had to take a lease for four months. You might as well live here. I'll leave you some money—not as much as I'd like, for I'm hard up—but some money."

"I thank you, no," she said, shaking her head. He thought of what an indemnity Aphra Shaler would have demanded, and he urged:

"Oh, I insist. I must insist. It's only fair to you."

"Unly fair to me!" she echoed with a sick smile. She wanted to scream. She wanted to attack him in a frenzy of hate—or of love; she could not tell which. But she was slow in everything: serene in sin and demure in her first wrath. She had only her pride to govern her swirl of thoughts, and her pride commanded her to take no charity from this man; to quit on equal terms. She set her chin high on a tortured throat and said:

"Don't worry about me. I go! I go!"

From her finger she twisted the ring he had bought her—a gorgeous "Montana diamond." From her throat she unclasped the necklace of "reconstructed" pearls. It was hard to unlock. That little annoyance almost wrecked her self-control. She came near tearing it to pieces in her impatience. She laid all his jewelry on the table. Perry glared at it, blushing at its cheapness and at its return. He groped futilely for words.

She went into the bedroom and got out the little black gown she had worn from Dutilh's shop, the frock she had had on in Fort Washington Park. She unshipped the top hook of the waist she had bought with Perry's money; then remembering, she drew the heavy portières that were the only door.

The lonely closing of those funeral hangings shamed Perry, and inclined

him to remorse. He felt that he must deal more gently with Maryla. He must plead with her not to be hurt, not to refuse to keep his money.

He parted the curtains and went in and set his hands on her shoulders and murmured:

"Now little Just Only Maryla, you mustn't."

But she felt herself already divorced from him. With a spasm of revulsion and a sound like a mad dog's cry, she writhed away and struck him backward in the face. Her taloned fingers gouged his cheek and brought blood to his torn lips. He felt the loathing in her wrath, and he knew that he would have scars to explain, and he snarled:

"You little beast!"

But she glared at him murderously and laughed uglily: "Huh-huh! huh-huh!"

He put his handkerchief to his mouth and leaned forward in unwonted gawkiness lest the blood drop on his gray plaid coat. Then he went into the bathroom and slapped cold water on his wounds, while Maryla hastily stepped into her old skirt and drew the frock up over her shoulders and fastened it, and put her hat on.

#### IV

MARYLA was so bewildered with dismay that she put into her hat the hat-pin he had bought for her one day—an amethyst-headed hat-pin, with the amethyst held in a gilded claw. She forgot that it was his purchase. It was the only jewelry she carried with her when she hurried through the door. She was afraid to meet the eyes of the sophisticated elevator boy, and she trotted down the nine flights of stairs winding about the shaft.

It seemed that the descent would lead her on down into Sheol, but at last she reached the ground floor and walked out of the ornate portal of her gingerbread palace to the pavement. She would have collided with the passers-by if they had not taken pains to avoid her. She crossed the wide street and kept one hand on the low park wall till she found a gate. She marched through the thicker night of the

winding roads. She paused to rest on the benches now and then, but her mood was onward, and she trudged the miles to the Plaza. All about her were vague couples making love. Their embraces disgusted her. The fog that was so dense on the Bay where Doctor Worthing was bidding good-by to Muriel Schuyler, was here no more than a thin white smoke that softened the lights into halftone and blurred the shadows.

She plodded down Fifth Avenue, past the boarded-up palaces, the locked churches, the dark-windowed shops, through all the architectural strata down to the lower depths below Washington Square. She turned east at Ludlow Street, which soon became Houston and led her home. She had dragged herself along like a Belgian refugee fleeing from the destruction of her little Louvain to the miserable charity of overcrowded slums.

She was so lonely and so weary that the thought of home had grown sweet to her as paradise. She climbed the stairs like a pilgrim toiling the last few steps to heaven. She foresaw a rapturous welcome. Her own people became the very symbols of love and of welcome.

She paused at the door to hear the familiar music of the sewing machines, the huge crickets of her heartless dwelling. She did not think of knocking, for it was her home. She opened the door and stepped in. No one heard her over the low rumor of the machines. Her grandfather, still seeming to stitch his white beard into the cloth, saw her and tried to speak, but his coughing choked him.

In the stifling air, in the stinted light, they were all sewing—treading away at their same old everlasting, ever hateful bicycle race. Fond as she was of them all, hungry as she was to be at home, she was struck in the heart by the hard reality. She could not imagine beauty or comfort where both had starved. The dream-walk was over, and the truth was worse than the nightmare. Yet this was her one haven, and the fat old slave at the farthest machine was the only mother she had ever had. And the need of sheltering arms wrenched from her the cry:

"Mamma!"

ALL the machines stopped. Three of the weary riders turned to stare with superstitious dread. Big little Dosia was the first to understand. She whirled and ran to Maryla with her arms outstretched. After her waddled her mother, shrieking with joy. Pasinsky rose and stood by his machine.

Adam alone did not rise. He had not even turned his head. He knew that voice. He had heard it when this Jezebel of a daughter was a tiny child grasping at her mother's narrow breast. She used to thrust her little arms into his beard and cling to a fistful of it till the tears came to his eyes. He could imagine back those old scenes, but also and all too vividly he could imagine his child in the arms of the man that desecrated her.

Regret exerts a varying influence on various souls. Adam Sokalski was of those who have such horror of defilement that when they see a chalice soiled they will not cleanse it or reclaim it; they blame it for its own misfortune and destroy it, or hurl it out of sight.

He had loved Maryla well and hoped that she would be a good daughter till she became a good wife and a good mother, and a good grandmother and so on to a good funeral. She had thrown his hopes into the muck of the world. He longed to be rid of her.

When Dosia and Rosa had crushed and smothered Maryla with their welcome they turned to see Adam bowed across his machine, his fierce hands clenched in his beard. His back was arched like Atlas' under the load of the heavy world.

Rosa led Maryla forward timidly, murmuring:

"Papa — Papa — Maryla iss come beck!"

"I dun't know no Maryla."

"Ach, Papa!" Rosa pleaded. "Pleass! pleass!"

"Once I had a Maryla, but she is voisser as dett alretty. A cholera on the Goy vat made her so."

"Ja, ja, on him; but not on Maryla."

"An Maryla auch! Und more yet. He vas only a Chreestian, but she knowed. Comes she here, I toin her owit. I make the door to in her face."

Maryla, with a grimace of despair,

tried to put away the clutching hands of her mother and go. But Rosa held her fast, imploring:

"Nu, nu, Papa, Papa! toin around once—look!"

Adam rose ominously, turned slowly, stared through fanatic eyes:

"Who iss it? I dun't know who iss it. *Ach, ja*, now I know. It iss dot fine Chreestian lady. Vat makes she here? She iss in de wrong ho'se."

Pasinsky put out his hand: "Meester Sokalski, I esk you—I esk you." Adam knocked his hand away. Pasinsky appealed to his penury in crafty words:

"You should not sendet her away. She sews good. She makes moch money. Vinter comes soon now."

"She makes more money by—by—*ach weh! weh! mein baby iss dett!*

He wept loudly, winding his arms about his head like sackcloth.

Rosa and Dosia ran to him, plied him with prayers to keep her home, to forgive her. Maryla did not speak. She stared at her father and through him at life and its cruelty. The clay in Adam's heart ached to take her back, but the patriarchal spirit of Mosaic bookkeeping abhorred such easy cancelation of debt. Yet at length he submitted:

"All right. Ve keep her. But dun't forget, Maryla, everybody knows. Your name is a hissink in Ollen Street. You vill be call 'dot Chreestian vomans.' It is de most ponishment to let you stay."

Maryla was exhausted with life. Suddenly she rebelled:

"For why should I live any more? For why? Everybody hates me. Everybody is glad if I am dead."

Her hand slid along the leaf of the nearest machine to a pair of great shears—the very shears that Balinsky had pressed to his side. She set the double points against her left breast and would have hammered them in if Pasinsky had not darted forward and knocked them clattering to the floor. He caught her hands in his, shouting:

"You should not hoit yourselluf. I dun't care vat you ditt. I loaf you. You can't loaf me, but you gotta live. I gotta have you livink here vere I can see you."

He rose to his knees, clinging to her hands and praying to her as to a queen.

Adam was revolted. His contempt was like spittle in Pasinsky's face:

"Vat for a dog are you to loaf soch a—soch a—"

Before he could venture the word, Pasinsky sprang to his feet, crying:

"Adam Sokalski, you say it und I kill you. Make choost once anudder mean woid, and I cut de heart out from you."

Adam was less terrorized than dazed. He flung out his hands in a wide shrug and went back to his sewing machine. He could understand that so many steps on the treadle meant so many stitches and so many garments finished. That was about all that was left to him to understand.

Pasinsky's outburst was exhausted by its triumph, and he dropped into a chair sobbing. Maryla envied him his sobs and the woe they released. She stood by him, comforting him:

"I stay, Henryk. I stay, if you wont cry any more."

Instantly Pasinsky's childish grief was altered to sobs of laughter:

"Ve shall be heppy, too. You'll see!—terrible heppy. You goink have nice t'ings vitout help of *Goyim*. I got *viel Geld*. For two years I am savink, und now it iss for you. See!"

He thrust his hand inside his shirt and unpinned a worn old wallet, and spilled on the sewing machine a tiny wealth of bills and coins. He spread it with his fingers, counting: "*Ein—fünf—zwanzig—sieben und dreissig*." He told it greedily past the hundred. Then he pushed it together and proffered it to her with a flourish.

Maryla understood how mighty the sum was in his eyes, and she smiled. But she shook her head.

"Thank you, Henryk, but I don't want it, your money. I want it to woik, and to help my Mamma and my Dosia and—and my Papa what hates me."

Adam's sewing machine ran slower as if relenting, then pushed grimly on again. Maryla took off her hat, laying down the hat-pin, which Dosia caught up with cries of admiration. Maryla blushed. She had thought she had brought nothing of Merithew's away. She was tempted to thrust the hat-pin into the stove, but she remembered how



Pet Bettany

Winnie Nicolls

Dr. Worthing



Pet was desperate. She even visited the Schuyler box, where she was not welcome, because she could not otherwise get near Muriel. Even Aphra Shaler, sauntering past unobserved, saw it, and writhed with jealousy. Muriel had no knowledge of



Muriel

Perry Merithew

Jacob Schuyler

Aphra Shaler



JAMES MONTGOMERY FLAGG

to Winnie Nicolls. She saw the idolatry in Perry Merithew's eyes as he kept them on Muriel. Everybody saw it but the intrigues going on about her. All that was important to her was that her beloved nation was losing a great historic battle.

gracious he had been when she saw it and exclaimed upon it in the little up-town jewelry shop, and how he had dragged her inside to purchase it, and had bought her the little ring besides.

So she restored the hat-pin to the hat and hung it on its old hook in the wardrobe. Then she came briskly back to the sewing machine that had been hers.

"It is good to be home," she said bravely. "And to work is good." She looked at the devout Pasinsky. "But for why is it people cannot love the people they had ought to love? For why must somebody always love somebody far off, or wrong?"

Adam resumed his scepter: "You waste your breath. It is not loafing that makes the sewing machine go round."

Maryla was so tired that it was good even to be tyrannized over. She had set her way-worn feet on the treadles and the thread paid out into the fabric, the coarse, sharp "pants" for poor workmen. Soon she grew wonderfully drowsy. The wheel ran slower and slower, and she fell asleep with her brow on the back of her hand.

Her father woke her with an almost tender roughness and ordered her to bed. She tottered to her boudoir under the shelf among the clothes behind the curtain, and undressed while she wavered with sleep. She put on again the coarse nightgown of her wont. She stretched herself out on the hard bed that she shared with Dosia, and on the instant she slept. Her mother bent over her with the down-gazing worship of mothers. Her father did not look at her, but he felt glad to have her safe.

## CHAPTER XXXII

**I**T was still dark when Maryla woke. Dosia sprawled and usurped more than her share. For all her fat, her knees were sharp. Adam's snore rattled and squawked and ended like a policeman's whistle. Rosa snored in snorts of peculiar swinishness.

Slowly the daybreak opened a window in the wall of darkness. Slowly it built

anew the furniture of the room—the idle little sewing engines, the backs of chairs. Maryla made out her father's profile, his head far back, his mouth a cleft of agony between his mustache and his upward-pointed beard.

Her mother's body extended in great billows, her fat head rolled down upon her uprolling bosom. In the corner on a cot, the tousled head of Pasinsky looked decapitated on its pillow. The morning light burned in white spots on the edges of pots and pans.

Outside the dirty windows she could see across the street other dirty windows and rusty fire-escapes, littered.

She remembered the fine linen of her yester home, the silk coverlet, the morning light gilding the satiny brass rail of her bedstead and flickering like water on the white tile of the bathroom. From that bed she could see across the gilt furniture, past the lacy curtains at the window seat, out to where the tops of green trees were fluttering plumbly. She had but to press a button and the maid came at her call and brought in ebony hands on an ivory tray a banquet of fruit and coffee and toast with a squat little jug of cream. Better than the food was the china, and the white napery best of all. Then she remembered the countless mornings of her life at home, the grave of insufficient sleep whence her father used to drag her to her work. She remembered the many mornings when she had wakened because she was too sleepy to sleep; and how often she had heard her father's snores choked off, had seen his heavy eyes start open in alarm at the light, how she had watched him fight the old battle between need and fatigue, and struggle to his elbow and nudge her mother, groaning:

*"Rosa, 's ist heller Tag!"*

How often she had seen her mother roll out to the floor trying to shake the dear slumber from her famished eyes! And then the clatter of starting the fire, the miserable every-morning opening of tombs for the doomsday of toil. She remembered the little troop of slaves chained to the sewing machines, scourged and self-scourged forever on, taking up

*Continued on page 1235 of this issue.*



## A Question of Courage

*WE give medals and homage to those who risk their lives for others; and yet—well, here is a story which will make you wonder not only what you would do if you faced Byington's crisis, but what you would want the one you love most to do.*

By William Hamilton Osborne

Author of "The Red Mouse," etc.

**I** WAS seated in a corner of the smoking room when Byington came in. I beckoned to him, and as he approached, I noted that he glanced neither to the right nor the left. He greeted no one. And yet the room was full.

He sat down facing me, with his back to everybody else. He was nervous, distraught. His face was gray.

"You've just got back," he began. "I'm glad. There's something that I want to tell you—I can't tell anybody else. Listen: Do you see two men in black sitting at the center table; they're looking at me, aren't they?"

I nodded. "The Gowings," I returned.

"They're in mourning for their sister," Byington went on. "She was drowned

ILLUSTRATED  
BY J. HENRY

two weeks ago at Sandyside. I don't know them very well. Are they looking at me still?

This is the first time that I've dared show up here."

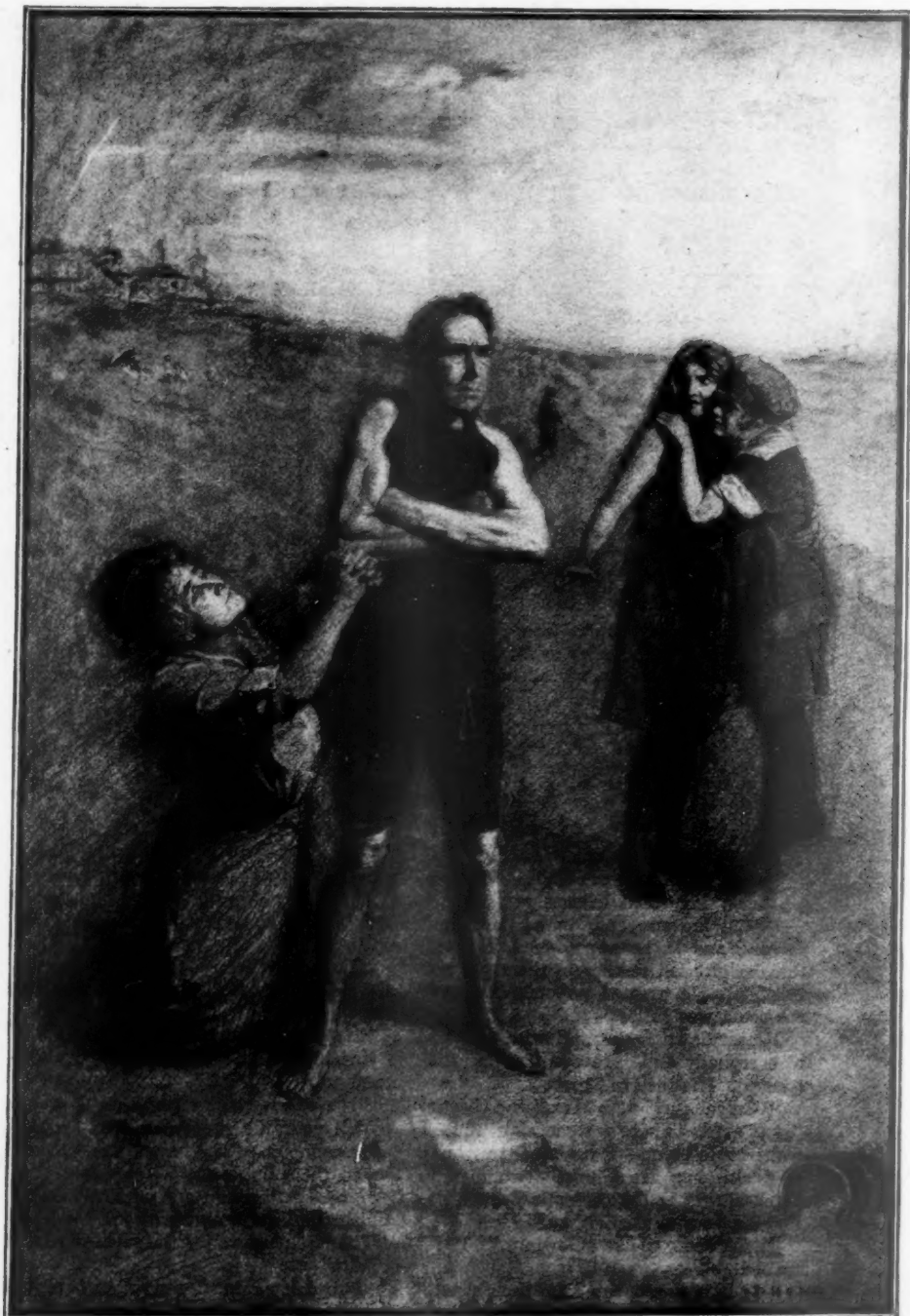
"They have been looking at you—they are talking earnestly together now," I said.

A nervous spasm took possession of Byington's long frame. Then he straightened up.

"It's about their sister that I've got to tell you," he proceeded, and brought a newspaper cutting from his pocket; "read this clipping."

I read it through and nodded when I finished. But Byington shook his head. "The last paragraph," he said,—"read it again."

I read it again. I remember it almost word for word:



"I stood there with folded arms—and watched her drown . . . . Her mother got down on her knees to me . . . ."

Unfortunately there were no strong swimmers on the beach save Warner Byington. He sprang into the surf at once, but was beaten back by the waves. He found it impossible to reach Miss Gowing, and she went down for the last time.

Byington put his hand on my arm. "Part of it's true," he said, huskily. "I was not only the only strong swimmer on the beach. I was the only *man* on the beach. The rest were women. You know the Sandyside crowd—*our* women, most of them. The men were over at a polo game. I was the only man there. So far, so good. But I *didn't* spring into the surf and I wasn't beaten back by the waves. The waves weren't high. It was an undertow that took her out. I could have saved her, I'm quite sure. I heard her cry out. I saw she was in trouble. What do you think I did? I stood there with folded arms and watched her drown." Byington shivered. "Her mother got down on her knees to me. . . . I walked to the bath house and got dressed. . . . That's the truth—God's truth," said Byington, "and all the women know it—they saw it all." He pressed his hands against his eyes. "Now—everybody knows it."

I wondered. But he was waiting for me. "What was it," I asked him, "sudden fright?"

"Not a bit of it," he said. He opened his hands. Upon the palms of both were slight abrasions. "I did that with my nails," he said, "forcing myself to stand still. But I stood still. I did the right thing—that's the only consolation I've got. . . . I see you don't quite understand."

"I don't," I said bluntly.

"Nor," he went on, "does anybody else. And yet it's clear as day. I'll tell you all about it. Maybe you'll understand. Nobody else seems to. . . . Let me explain one thing, though, first: That woman on her knees—Miss Gowing's mother—if she'd offered me twenty-five or fifty thousand dollars on the spot, I'd have gone out after her daughter." He shrugged his shoulders. "What's the use? The Gowings haven't got anything but what the boys earn—they're like all the rest of us."

I evaded Byington's unwavering

glance. "I'm all at sea," I said—a bit gruffly, perhaps. "You're an expert swimmer. You've never had a reputation as a coward—"

"Never until now," he said.

"But you wouldn't go after this girl unless they paid you money."

"Right," he returned, "and it would have to be big money."

"You'd better go on," I exclaimed. But I didn't look at him.

BYINGTON opened his wallet and carefully filed away the clipping.

"You remember Carlisle?" he asked.

"He was a member of the club."

"Carlisle was drowned," I interposed.

"Exactly," went on Byington, "drowned under peculiar circumstances. He was alone with his wife and kids—down on the beach, playing in the sand. The girl he saved was swimming thirty yards from shore. She caught a cramp and yelled. He undressed and went in. Do you remember the peculiar thing that happened then?"

I knew. I hadn't forgotten it. "His wife clung to him," I said, "and implored him not to go. He threw her down upon the sand, didn't he?—wrenched himself away?"

"He did more," said Byington; "he struck her in the face to get away. The bruise was there three weeks after his death. The little boy told that—remember? Well, Carlisle went in and got the girl—she was going down when he reached her. The girl was strong as an ox, though—and cool headed at that. She did just what Carlisle told her to do. But Carlisle must have felt all in. He yelled for his wife to throw out a life-preserver. . . . You know Sandyside, don't you? You know we have no ropes and no life-guards there. . . . But you know those posts with the round life-buoys fastened to 'em. . . . Carlisle's wife slung one of those things out. The girl caught it. Carlisle saw she had it. He gave a gulp, sank back and disappeared. . . . The girl was saved. She was one of the hotel help. Ten days later she was arrested for lifting a pearl necklace from the jewel-case of a guest. Now the girl is serving time in State's prison. But Carlisle went down for good."



"I remember that," I said. I searched my memory. "What became of Carlisle's wife and kids?" I asked.

"Ah," returned Byington, the color coming slowly into his face, "you can ask that question of fifty of Carlisle's friends—they'll never tell you. Carlisle had four small children, two boys and two girls. He had his wife. He had a salary of thirty-five hundred dollars a year—just about like the most of us here. He had no insurance. They wouldn't take him. His family-history wasn't up to the mark, and he was prone to illness himself. But he was in fine condition when he drowned.... And there was terrific enthusiasm—headlines in the papers and all that. His company donated a thousand dollars to his widow. We took up a purse—I think five hundred dollars or so. Then we all forgot."

"I remember now that we all forgot," I ventured.

"Carlisle's income was cut off with his life," proceeded Byington; "he had lived up to his income like all the rest of us. His people were all dead. His wife's people were all dead. What became of her? I'll tell you later about that."

"The girl he saved is in State's prison," I repeated.

Byington half smiled. "If she'd stolen the gems to give to Carlisle's wife, I'd have forgiven her," he said. Then he went on:

"We watched Carlisle's widow for a time, until she drifted beyond our horizon. But we saw the bitterness creep into her before she drifted out of sight. Carlisle had struck her in the face—for what? Just to wrench himself free, in order that he might have the satisfaction of saving—what? A jailbird, without kith or kin. It didn't take his wife long to forget his heroism. Why didn't he think of his wife and children? That was her complaint.

"Can you see the drift? It made a terrible impression on my wife. Ethel knew me—knew my propensities. You know how I first met Ethel, don't you? I pulled her out of the surf at Bayhead. She made a great to-do about it. It was the first time I'd ever met her. We fell in love at first sight. But it was nothing.

I've pulled a dozen people out of the water—maybe more."

He fumbled in his pockets: "Here's my life-saving badge," he went on. "I've passed the government test for amateurs—dived fifteen feet for twenty-five pound stones and brought 'em up—I know all the grips and clutches.... But this Carlisle business gave my wife the creeps. We've got five children—only one boy in the crowd. She put herself in Carlisle's wife's place—she couldn't sleep. She made me promise....

"Yes, I promised; it's true. But that promise didn't deter me—I'd have broken any promise—any mere promise—two weeks ago to save that Gowing girl. It wasn't the promise. It was the appalling fact that I couldn't shake from me, that my life didn't belong to me. It belonged to Ethel and the kids.

"You can talk about heart all you want to—about impulse. If you do a thing you've no right to do, you've committed crime. Carlisle might as well have committed suicide. If he'd blown his brains out, he'd have got no sympathy—no laurels would have rested on his grave. But that's what he did—he committed suicide.

"Well, I'm alive to-day—I'm earning money. I haven't anything but what I earn. But my wife's comfortable. My kids are comfortable. I kept my promise. What's more, I did the right thing. It *was* the right thing to do."

"I see it now," I said.

"The Gowing girl's death doesn't bring material discomfort to anybody," he went on. "You understand that I say *material* discomfort. My death would have spelled ruin for my family." He held out his hands toward me in a sort of appeal.

"For God's sake," he exclaimed, "tell me, what would you have done?"

"In the same circumstances," I answered, "the very same thing."

"You are sure of that?" he asked eagerly.

"Positive."

"Of course," he said, "you know what it means. We're branded—all of us, through me. There isn't a man in the club here but will sneer behind my back.





"It didn't take his wife long to forget his heroism. Why didn't he think of his wife and children? That was her complaint."

My children come into the house with wondering faces. They've got the facts—the neighbor's children take good care of that. Ethel, even, looks at me at times with a touch of disdain—she can't help it. I might as well have killed the Gowing girl; they'll all know me as the man who stood by with folded arms, the man who let her drown."

"But," I returned, "when you think of Carlisle's wife—"

"Ah," said Byington.

I LEARNED afterwards that he had thought of her a great deal. The Gowing affair had brought Carlisle's death home to him. He sought out Carlisle's widow and found her. After that he paid her out of his already insufficient income, as much as a thousand dollars a year. Carlisle's widow told somebody—I heard about it. I told Byington about my knowledge of the fact. He admitted it.

"Of course," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "it means cutting out the university for Junior. That's all gone. But let me tell you about *her*—Carlisle's wife. She was a scarecrow—the children were in rags. Twenty dollars a week means Paradise for them. She almost got down on her knees—Carlisle's wife. Think of it. You remember how she used to hold up her head. I was a good man, she told me. I had thought of my wife and children. But she didn't deceive me. All through the interview I could see the contempt in her face—her contempt for me. Carlisle was a hero—

I was a cad. Her man had been brave—Ethel's was an arrant coward. She couldn't hide it; I saw it in her face. I can't face her any more. I shiver every time I sign her check.... Tell me," pleaded Byington, for the fiftieth time, "*what would you have done?*"

Byington's boy didn't lose the university. Byington foresaw something in our big overgrown town. He took an option on a big tract on Long Hill—a mile above the town. It meant almost immediate return. Inside of eight years he had made a fortune—eighty thousand dollars—possibly a hundred. Meantime his wife had died. His children had grown up.

YESTERDAY Byington was drowned at Ballston Beach. He saved two lives, but he couldn't save his own. Today I heard the Gowing boys talking it over in the Club.

"That's Byington," they said, "—a newsboy and a girl—the newsboy's sweetheart. You know the kind. But he wouldn't save our sister. Can you beat it?"

The Gowings were addressing me. "I can beat it," I returned, "only by telling you what Byington told me—what he wouldn't tell you or anybody else." And so I told them all about it.

"What," I said to the Gowing boys, "*would you have done?*"

"I know," they returned impatiently, "but Lucy was our sister—she was Lucy Gowing—and the man just stood there, with folded arms—that's all."



### "Regards to Mary"

Another batch of letters is coming from *Fred A. Gross*, whose recital of the joys of house building, under the title of "*Own Your Own Home*," was an uproariously humorous feature of the January Red Book. Watch for

### "WELCOME TO OUR CITY"

BY RING W. LARDNER

Author of "*Letters of a Bush-Leaguer*"

In the May Issue of The Red Book Magazine—on the News-stands April Twenty-third.



ILLUSTRATED  
BY F. FOX

# The Kind Words Club

*THE object of the organization was to uplift its members and Oldetown generally, and incidentally, to get a new carpet for the church. It got a new carpet for the church.*

By Ida M. Evans

Author of "Virginia," "Mudpuddles," etc.



ELINDA LOOMIS was not present at the inception of the club. That afternoon she had to bake bread, and iron. So she joined by proxy. Oldetown already had nine women's clubs. Two were dead, two were dying, four had locomotor ataxia. Melinda did not suppose that one more would do any harm.

Afterward, when the consequences of her unthinking acquiescence began to pile up and up, as consequences have a terrible knack of piling, she grimly resolved that thereafter—

But all resolutions having to do regretfully with consequences, are made too late. If they were made earlier, the world would naturally be much less infested with consequences. By the time Miss Melinda Loomis had grimly made this resolution and laid it away for preservation in memory's cold storage, she had lost her peace of mind, twelve dollars saved toward a new brown *crêpe de meteor* dress, most of her boarders, one fingernail, some twenty-odd friendships, her temper some thirty-odd times, and all the vanity that thirty-seven busy, hard-working years had allowed her to retain. This last was no great amount, but it hurt considerably to lose it.

It was small consolation that nearly



The Reverend Bloss needed two handkerchiefs to sop his own tears over his own sermon.

every other woman of Oldetown was in the same grim condition of regret. Other folks' toothaches do not lessen yours.

It was Monday morning when Mrs. Gilsey telephoned to Melinda. (Naturally! Melinda said afterward—and was fined one dollar and thirty-five cents for saying it—that she needn't have been surprised, for the Sunday morning preceding, the Reverend Bloss needed two handkerchiefs to sop his own tears over his own sermon, and always when that happened, Anne Gilsey got up the following Monday morning with a burning desire to do something worthy, to help a poor family, or to put clean shelf paper in her pantry, or start a club, or break Ed Gilsey of smoking.) Melinda was hanging out the weekly wash when the telephone rang, — Mrs. Polski, her laundress, being ill,—and she was not exactly in sweet tune with the universe.

Breakfast had been a series of complaints. Her father, who had spent sixty-nine years trembling for his country's welfare, complained irascibly because last Tuesday's *Herald* had been lost before he jotted down the Progress-

ive gain—or loss—in two southern counties of the state. Mr. Downs, a traveling salesman, complained absently because the coffee was too hot. Mrs. Jocelyn, a middle-aged widow, later complained languidly because it was too cold. Mrs. Downs, a fretful, frizzed woman, complained sharply because the potatoes had been fried too brown for her ten-year old Bertie. Old Mr. Hayes, a nineteenth cousin of Melinda's dead mother, complained discursively because neither weather nor salt side-meat were what they had been when he was young. Jonathan Burry, a middle-aged fourth cousin of Melinda's father, who had filled prescriptions at Ed Gilsey's drug store so long that his face was a pharmaceutical scrawl of wrinkles, complained mildly because Bertie Downs had sat at his place and left a Futurist scene in poached-egg yellow on the table-cloth.

It was somewhat of a relief when the boiling suds in the kitchen beyond hissed down the noise of complaints. But the cistern was dry, and Melinda had to use hard well-water, which took longer boiling. Moreover, the March day was as raw as pounded beefsteak; the clothes stiffened, freezing almost before you could swing them from basket to line. However, when your supply of napkins is barely adequate to your boarders' needs, wash-day is not postponed for sleet, drouth, sickness or Sunday-school picnic. And since it takes hustle and finesse to squeeze four large tubs between a late breakfast and an early luncheon, Melinda waited longingly when the telephone rang, hoping some one in the house would answer it.

But her father had found the *Herald* and was snortingly absorbed in it. Old Mr. Hayes had stepped out for his morning digestion-walk. Jonathan Burry and Mr. Downs had left the house for business. Mrs. Downs had gone to school to learn why Bertie had been kept in the Friday before. Mrs. Jocelyn, who fought middle-age as a cotton raiser fights the boll weevil, was busy in her room with a new complexion-vibrator. So Melinda had to take the clothes-pins out of her mouth and go in.

She cut Mrs. Gilsey's fervid explanation short. "Good heavens, Anne, I

could no more come over to your house and help you start a new club this afternoon than I could schottische up a telephone pole,"—decidedly. "I haven't a clean-ironed napkin in the house, and my yeast is raising all over the back of the stove this minute. You join for me."

"You might not care to agree to all the by-laws,"—doubtfully.

Melinda laughed tolerantly. She saw herself not agreeing to any by-law that gentle, conservative, anxious-to-do-good-and-be-good-and-inspire-good Anne Gilsey introduced.

"Do they run counter to the Ten Commandments?"—amusedly.

"Certainly not." Anne's sense of humor, Melinda often said, was about the size of a small flea. "They will uplift the club members, and Oldetown, and—I think,"—hopefully,—“get a new carpet for the church."

"Are the dues heavy?"—quickly. "'Cause Pa's got so he spends all his pension on political literature, and boarders don't spell coupon clippings." And Melinda half-turned from the transmitter. It was no small matter to leave a basket of wet clothes in a cold wind for ten minutes.

"There won't be any dues,"—smoothly. "Just—just fines."

"I'll dodge the fines, bless you," abstractedly promised Melinda, and hurried out to the back yard. On the way, for warmth, she slipped on an old, unsightly coat of her father's, lying handily on a chair.

Four minutes later, her full face took on a shade of purple besides that painted by the raw wind. The Loomis house was on the corner, so the back yard adjoined the street. Coming along the street was Alexander Gottlieb, Oldetown's leading dentist.

There is no town, however great or however small, that has not some one object in which it takes great pride and mentions with ostentation to strangers,—a Westminster Abbey, a Great White Way, a congested Loop, a Golden Rule mayor, a new, rococo-pillared, pressed-brick jail, a local Beau Brummel, a notoriously investigated Congressman, or an iron angel fountain in the public square.

In Oldetown, that object was Alexander Gottlieb, a suave, portly, handsome, unmarried, light-complexioned gentleman. He had come from another part of the state several years before; he ate only two white rolls and a sugared half of a grapefruit for breakfast; and he owned a tasty gray and gold electric runabout. Oldetown was an unprogressive village. Part of it considered cold apple pie an integral part of the matutinal meal; the remainder swore by fried potatoes, oatmeal, fried pork, preserves and pickled prunes as early appetizers. And Oldetown's automobiles were not numerous—two weak-engined limousines, one balky truck that Helder, the grocer, solemnly cursed every Saturday night and tried to forget over Sunday, a flimsy racer owned by Ed Gilsey, and a contraption that the Jenkins boy had evolved from a second-hand cylinder and his father's old phaeton. These were all.

Naturally Oldetown plumed itself on the up-to-date runabout and the fact that its owner had been mentioned once before he came to Oldetown and twice since, as personable material for State Representative. As for the grapefruit—Sadie Fane, the music teacher, who knew her Robert Chambers, said loftily that all civilized folks ate it, and Oldetown became furtively ashamed of apple pie and oatmeal.

Naturally, that gray-and-gold smart-

Mrs. Jocelyn fought middle age as a cotton raiser fights the boll weevil.



ness rolling by would make any woman uncomfortably conscious of an old tobacco-stained coat, a shrunk, piebald percale skirt which the wind flapped grotesquely about her calves, and a drab woolen fascinator (an article utterly bellying its name) from under which her graying sandy hair wisped in suds-day disarray.

Melinda Loomis was not sentimental. Afterward she indignantly told Anne Gilsey that she wasn't in love with the man—not a whit! But any woman who had fried side-meat, eggs, potatoes, pork, mush, hominy and pancakes, besides cooking oatmeal, toast, sauce and tapioca, every morning for twenty years, would have a restful, pleasant feeling when she thought of setting out a beautiful easy meal like grapefruit and rolls.

And Melinda was not vain. She had often remarked that keeping boarders was worse than smallpox to rob a woman of vanity. Once she had ridden in that runabout. Mr. Gottlieb had given her a lift as he overtook her walking in from the cemetery. Once, when he filled a tooth of hers, he had patted her shoulder at the painful moment. But she estimated those attentions exactly at their par value of ordinary politeness. And now, as the runabout whizzed around the corner, she said rudely to herself, "Don't be an old fool, Melinda," energetically shook out a bedspread and shook off the purple blush.

A moment later, though, when Sadie Fane, lithe, winsome, sweet, twenty-three years old, went by, her new spring dress of golden brown *crêpe de mêtêor* fluttering as radiantly in the bleak street as a daffodil on a sand-bank, Melinda Loomis looked enviously after her. Though she was neither sentimental nor vain, there were times when Melinda wistfully knew that if her thirty-seven years had not been so very busy, they would have been a trifle drab. And this would have been one of those wistful times, had not the wind just then swooped meanly under the bedspread on which her hold had relaxed, tossed it, fought with the staying clothespin for it, and finally tore it straight through the center with a mad *z-z-zip* that horrified Melinda.

Melinda Loomis was not given to pro-

fanity. "But I might as well've said it as thought it," she mourned, disconsolately swishing the torn strips of Mar-seilles over the line. "I just can't spare two dollars for a new one."

A WEEK afterward, Melinda found time to go to Mrs. Brown's home for the second meeting of the Kind Words Club, as it had been christened. She listened unhearingly to the reading of the by-laws and the constitution. At the time, Mrs. Jenkins insisted upon telling her, in vivacious aside, how the four littlest Jenkinsses had just whooped, choked and imbibed soothing syrup through six weeks of whooping-cough. The recital was not especially interesting, but Melinda had no idea that the by-laws and the constitution being read were any more interesting, or had not been cast in the common unoriginal mold that had served for all other clubs of Oldetown, social, sewing, literary, intellectual and philanthropic.

She joined placidly in the general agreement that there were altogether too many unkind, malicious, spiteful, thoughtless, denunciatory, defamatory and censorious words spoken in this world, and this body of Oldetown women should strive with all its might not to increase that number. She heard vaguely that one-third of the proceeds would be spent for gingham to be sewed by the club into garments for Oldetown's poor, and the other two-thirds should go for a new carpet for the church. At the last, Anne Gilsey added a clause that each one joining should agree to stay "joined" for six months, or forfeit—or be fined—ten dollars.

Melinda remembered afterward that Mrs. Brown, whose husband was a lawyer, had compressed her mouth in a funny objecting way. But, recalling the two dead clubs, the two dying and the four paralyzed, because of dwindling membership, Melinda herself felt that this was an excellent proviso.

Not until she and Anne Gilsey were walking away from the house did Melinda wonder what the new money-making clause was. And then, even as she was about to ask, she said first, laughing drily: "Didn't Mrs. Helder smell ter-



ribly of mothballs? And the old seal-skin coat is worn to the hide—"

"Oh—Melinda!" Anne's voice was pained and horrified and woeful.

"What's the matter?"—startled.

"I'll let it go this time,"—hastily, "though we're supposed to report every offense. And I'm recorder, you know. But you're hardly in practice yet—"

"What on earth are you talking about, Anne Gilsey?" demanded Melinda.

Anne looked at her with funeral blue eyes, as though she, Melinda, had committed a crime and deserved execution.

"You can't talk that way about a fellow club-member,"—coldly.

"Why can't I? Oh, that vow to speak kindly!" Melinda laughed gaily. "I forgot. I'll be more careful after this."

"I — I won't count it this time," said Anne reluctantly. "Only it was — I guess,"—reflectively, — "it was eighteen words you spoke. That would be ninety cents!"

"What's that?" asked Melinda queerly.

"Why, the fine of five cents for every unkind word uttered by one member of another.

Of course, Melinda, if you feel like insisting on my taking the ninety cents, we could get enough gingham for the next meeting's work." Anne looked hopefully at Melinda's purse.

Silently Melinda Loomis took ninety cents from it and handed it to her.

It was a relief to both that Alexander Gottlieb should meet them a few steps farther. He was always a suave man, and he stopped to inquire genially about the health of the new club. And then, Melinda, for the second time, was startled. For he politely intimated that he would like to call at the Loomis house some evening that week.

Melinda was not vain. "What's he coming for?" she wondered aloud, when he had gone on.

"I wonder, too," involuntarily echoed Anne, and immediately, in some confusion, tried to cover the lack of tact. "Though, I'm sure there's nothing to wonder at! I've often thought, Melinda, that you'd be real nice-looking, if you weren't so flustered-looking."

"Keeping boarders is flustery," briefly observed Melinda.

"And if you dressed a tiny bit better,"—gently.

"I'd like to,"—curtly. And then, though she was not vain, one hand went to a wisp of hair slipping down, and she

said wistfully, "I had a notion to get a brown *crêpe* this spring. I've got twelve dollars—no,"—glumly,— "eleven dollars and ten cents."

Anne's fingers tightened on the money they held. "That's plenty," she commented cheerfully.

"I'm afraid not,"—doubtfully, "though maybe Mrs. Jocelyn wouldn't charge much to help me make it."

"I'm sure she won't," soothingly.

But she did. "More than a regular dressmaker would charge for doing the whole thing," Melinda said resentfully when Anne called up several days later. "I tell you, that woman—"

"Don't say it!" cried Anne.

"Why?"

"She told me yesterday that she wants to join the club, and—"

From Melinda's end of the wire came an inarticulate sound. Mrs. Gilsey hastily switched to another subject. "Did Alexander Gottlieb call yet?"

"He did." Melinda was not obtuse. She readily gave the information desired. "He came at seven-thirty. He stayed



Once, when he filled her tooth, he patted her shoulder at the painful moment.



Pa thought he came to hear how big a dent the Progressives had put in the political jawbone of the country.

till twelve-thirty. Old Mr. Hayes thought he came to hear what kind of weather was passed around when he was young. So—he told him. Pa thought he came to hear how big a dent the Progressives had made in the political jawbone of the county. So—he gave him the dimensions. Jim Downs had an idea he came to get posted on his territory's cigar sales. So—he posted him, whenever he could shunt off Pa and Mr. Hayes. Jonathan Burry supposed he came to collect pharmaceutical statistics. So he stayed up till twelve, and—handed statistics over. In all the fourteen years that Jonathan has boarded with me, and Ma before me, I never knew him,—curiously,—“to stay up after nine-thirty, or say more than twenty words a week, till Thursday night! And Mrs. Jocelyn,”—drily—“assumed that he came to see her. And Mrs. Downs took it for granted that the man came to learn how Bertie was doing at school. So—she gave him full details. Bertie Downs thought he came to find out how to put a puzzle map together. So he sat on his lap till nearly eleven and showed him.” Melinda paused eloquently.

“Dear me,” said Anne, as eloquently.

“But he is coming again next week. And,”—wistfully,—“I suppose I’m fool-

ish, but I do want a new brown dress. And after all the favors Ella Jocelyn has got from me—”

Anne Gilsey was a club member first, and a friend afterward. “That is eleven words,”—rebukingly. “Fifty-five cents!”

“Well, for—” Then Melinda hung up the receiver, and she hung it violently. She compressed her lips grimly, and she kept them compressed for two weeks and two meetings.

THEN Melinda’s fines appeared inconsequential affairs beside other incidents in the club and out. Mrs. Jocelyn said, between the third meeting and the fourth, that Mrs. Brown knew how Mr. Brown mismanaged her estate. (Mrs. Jocelyn’s estate consisted of three cottages in the poorer part of Oldtown). Mrs. Jocelyn was not without sporting blood. She paid the forty-five cents with tolerable amiability. But when the record of the why and wherefore of this fine was read the next Monday, Mrs. Brown listened in a silence fuzzed with unamiability. Anne Gilsey quickly moved that in the future only the amount of the fines be read. Perhaps, she said uneasily, other details were troublous, and not conducive to perfect good-feeling. Melinda and nine others quickly seconded the motion. Mrs. Jenkins alone dissented. “But she’s safe,” tartly whispered Mrs. Helder to Melinda, “because she never talks about anything but her children’s everlasting diseases.” And instantly, her plump face pink, Mrs. Helder furtively slid seventy cents to the desk.

Soon there was plenty of gingham for the club to sew, and a considerable sum toward the new green velvet carpet desired for the church. In the beginning, Mrs. Gilsey had proposed that at every meeting the absentees be discussed, but not as unlucky absentees are usually discussed! Mention should be made of their good points.

Melinda opposed the project. She doubted its wisdom. "Don't try any of that absent treatment on me if I can't get there some day," she crisply commanded. "It smacks too much of 'The services are private and please omit flowers.'"

Mrs. Gilsey was indignant. And as a matter of fact, the plan was very successful for three meetings. At the first no one was absent; at the second, no one but Mrs. Bloss, the frail, pleasant, overworked wife of the Reverend Bloss. At the third meeting, Anne Gilsey was not present, and there was no difficulty in eulogizing her.

At the fourth, Mrs. Helders was at home with a cold. Anne started the ball of kind comment. It rolled nicely around the room, gaining an adjective here, a superlative there, till it reached Mrs. Brown. There it stopped. Mrs. Brown haughtily raised her head. Several then remembered that this was May, and that every May for several years back Mrs. Brown had planted flower seeds—and for several years back, as soon as she planted them Mrs. Helders' chickens from the adjoining yard strolled over and devoured them.

The room waited uneasily. Calmly Mrs. Brown adjusted a band to a small gingham blouse before she said, slowly, bitingly:

"I—have—nothing whatever—to—say—concerning—the—lady."

There was a general gasp, as though a charge of shrapnel had struck all present. Anne Gilsey's lips wavered apart for expostulation.

Added Mrs. Brown icily: "Please take notice that I said—nothing—whatever—unkind!"

A few days later, Mrs. Bracy, wife of the coal dealer, met Melinda Loomis in the meat market, and gloomily confided that she wouldn't attend the sociable to be held soon at the parsonage, though she'd send a jelly layer cake as usual. She really didn't dare to come. "Because I never know what I'm liable to blurt out," she grumbled. "I just said that Mrs. Helders could well afford to wear silk stockings—Helders charging us forty-three cents for preserved eggs all winter. And there went two dollars that

I'd saved for a fern dish. Ten words don't make hardly any size of sentence. And the adjectives and verbs roll out of my mouth like marbles out of a bag."

Melinda sighed. "Sometimes I think it would be cheaper—and save trouble in the long run—to pay the ten dollars and resign," she declared.

Mrs. Bracy, who was of volatile temperament, chuckled. "That's what Sadie Fane said. My, she was mad when Anne Gilsey heard her wondering why Alexander—" Mrs. Bracy stopped short, with the nonplused expression of one who has unexpectedly put a foot into a large, deep hole.

"Why, he had come to our house four times in three weeks," composedly said Melinda; but her face reddened. "I guess plenty of other folks are wondering. 'I am myself.'"

"Oh, I'm sure there's nothing to wonder at,"—hastily. But Mrs. Bracy uncomfortably reached for a topic to pull herself out of the hole. "What kind of a dress are you going to get this spring?"

"Huh!" bitterly answered Melinda. "None—unless the club donates me ten yards of brown gingham. If I'd known that Mrs. Downs was likely to join it—" She broke off in the quick, scared way that was becoming habitual in Oldetown.

The fines decreased in number and amount; but the sociable was a dull affair. Melinda did not go. Very few did. The Reverend Bloss commented in troubled tones on the small attendance.

The club meetings were quiet,—"lukewarm," Annie Gilsey worriedly remarked to Melinda.

"Fortunately," said Melinda. Anne looked at her suspiciously, but her expression was guileless.

"But we already have almost enough for a beautiful carpet,"—jubilantly.

"That's nice." But there was small enthusiasm in Melinda's voice.

"Aren't you glad?"—reproachfully.

"Oh, I s'pose so,"—coldly. "But I'd be gladder, doubtless, if old Mr. Hayes hadn't left this morning. He was a small eater,"—resentfully,— "and it helped to offset some of the others." She sighed.

"Why did he leave?" Mrs. Gilsey looked apprehensive.

"Since Mrs. Jocelyn and Mrs. Downs and I joined the club,"—drily,—“we don't talk so much, and Jonathan Burry never did talk much; so that left only Pa and ten-year-old Bertie Downs for the old gentleman to listen to. He doesn't like Pa's political views, and Pa never talks about much else. And—he doesn't like Bertie at all. So—he left.”

Anne took offense at the implication that the club was to blame. “Why *don't* you talk? Surely you can think of pleasant, kind things to say.”

“When all your mind is bent on avoiding sandburrs,” retorted Melinda, “you don't stop to gather moss.”

“Nonsense,” said her friend irritably. Melinda looked at her curiously. Anne Gilsey was seldom irritable.

**B**UT irritation began to be general in Oldetown. You could almost hear it boil. Though the lid of taciturnity held it down most of the time, every little while it popped up, as the lid of a kettle pops from over-bubbling soup. Then there was a fine, which was like putting more fuel under the boiling kettle. Nearly every woman in town was sulking over a fine, or avoiding one with gingerly compressed lips.

Even Mrs. Jenkins, always before entirely absorbed with her offsprings' ailments, was heard naively to say that it was funny how many horrid things you couldn't help thinking of to say, after you'd promised not to say 'em.

And finally, as was inevitable, the lid popped off entirely—with a hissing, boiling, slamming, soul-scalding result. Melinda Loomis was the indirect cause. Afterward she said that she didn't care.

She was in her kitchen one afternoon, putting the remnants of a beef roast through the meat chopper, when Mrs. Jocelyn, who had entered the house a few minutes before, ran down from her room and into the kitchen in that bouncing, offended way that all boarding-house keepers are familiar with.

“Melinda,” she cried, “you've got to keep that Downs boy out of my room. Another box of my best writing paper half gone! I feel like looking for another boarding-place.”

Melinda sighed. “I've spoken to his mother,”—in the soothing manner that all boarding-house keepers use mechanically.

“Oh!” Mrs. Jocelyn had long, fallow fingers. She snapped four of them with a *crack-crack-crack* of contempt. “That does a lot of good. I have my opinion of a woman who boards because she won't have the trouble of keeping house—” Mrs. Jocelyn broke off in the quick, scared way that had become habitual in Oldetown.

“Don't worry,” said Melinda curtly. “I'm not reporting anything.”

“Thank you,”—glumly. And then Melinda got a brand-new lesson in the vagaries of human nature. For Mrs. Jocelyn favored her with a long glance that had more suspicion than gratitude in it, and said coldly, “I suppose that implies that, on the other hand, you wouldn't report anything Mrs. Downs said about *me*.”

“I'm not reporting *anything*,”—with dignity.

“I demand to know what she said!”

“I didn't say she said a word—”

“I'll insist that Mrs. Downs be fined,” persisted Mrs. Jocelyn.

“And you assured me, Melinda Loomis,”—it was the anger-quavered voice of Mrs. Downs herself, who had that moment come down stairs,—“that you would not mention it!”

“I didn't mention it,” cried Melinda, flustered. “I didn't say a word,”—frantically.

“I will pay the fine,” cried Mrs. Downs. “And moreover, Melinda, I understand that *you* have been fined several times. I shall insist that the records of all fines be made public.” It was the bubbling of wrath too tightly lidded.

“I myself think,” shrilled Mrs. Jocelyn, “that the record of the fines would be interesting to all of us!”

It was then that the flustered Melinda put her finger into the meat-chopper, instead of a slice of meat, and the nail of that finger was cleanly pared off from crescent to edge. Melinda bit her lip over the pain. But the two had gone upstairs and she could hear them unmistakably packing their possessions.

"I don't care," moaned Melinda. Lying awake that night with the painful finger, in spite of the soothing oil that Jonathan Burry got from the drugstore after supper, Melinda wondered unkindly—and told it afterward—why Anne Gilsey existed.

At the next meeting, Mrs. Downs and Mrs. Jocelyn kept their word. They moved, seconded the motion and demanded, all in one tense outcry, that the records be read.

The vote was impetuous, waiting not for the chairman's word, and the vote was loud. But it clashed upon itself. Part were vociferously for. Some were panicfully against. Melinda was silent. Her finger hurt.

"Oh, my—no—no!" cried Anne Gilsey. Her voice was tremulous with positive fright. "I don't think it would be at all wise. In fact, since we have more than enough for the carpet, and since—there—there seems to be a certain strain connected with the club, I was about to suggest that we disband."

"I heard that Mrs. Brown talked terribly that afternoon I wasn't here," acidly remarked Mrs. Helders. "And I'd pay a stiff fine to hear what she said. You'd think she'd planted a carload of imported Dutch bulbs instead of two ten-cent packages of common varieties mixed!"

But she became conscious that no one was listening. For Anne Gilsey had done a very unwise thing. She had frightenedly snatched the book of fine records, as though it were in danger, and held it tight to her breast.

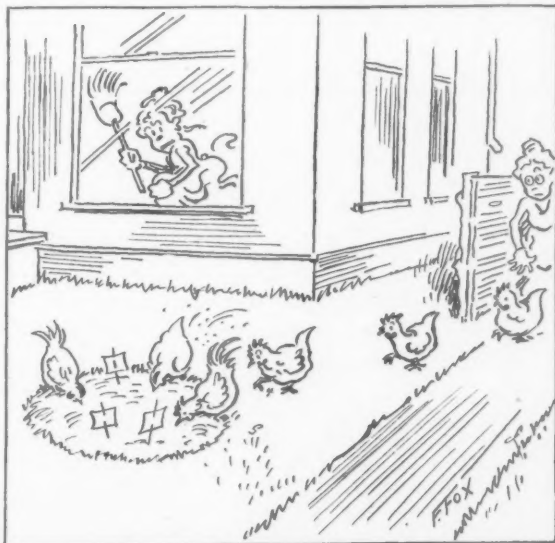
Her action was a challenge; it had an effect exactly opposite to that intended by her. Even Melinda, who at the moment was only a bystander watching interestedly, never knew which ones were first in the onrush. But the crowd swooped at Anne

holding tight to the book, and a dozen hands grabbed that book, and Anne, struggling from the crush, collapsed on the nearest chair and wept abandonedly. Gingham, rompers, blouses, dresses, needles, thread, scissors, personal belongings of the members and the chairman's desk were knocked about or trampled underfoot. Mrs. Helders, catching sight of her name in conjunction with Mrs. Brown's, grabbed the page and tore it out. Others followed her example, tossing them to the floor when they proved uninteresting to themselves. From the floor, they were grabbed up by others and read avidly or tossed back. There was a clamor of cries. "This is terrible," sobbed Anne Gilsey. "I'll never enjoy that green velvet carpet."

"Enjoy it?" cried a hoarse voice, unrecognizable in the crash of many voices. "Do you think I'd step my foot on anything, if it was made of glistening green emeralds, that had been paid for by aspersions on my moral character?"

Anne clapped her hands over her red ears and sobbed. Even Melinda quaked. She had feared there would be a disastrous end. But this!

"Wait till I tell my husband—"



Mrs. Helders' chickens strolled over and devoured them.



Melinda had feared there would be a disastrous end. But this!

"This is worth a damage suit."

"You wait till I tell *her* husband."

"My children would never have had the chicken-pox if she hadn't sent Carl out to play with them before he was well."

"I'll never trade at that store again."

"Nor me."

"This is libel!"

"I'll leave the church!"

"I shall move out of this town."

Three pages had fluttered to Melinda's feet and been overlooked. She saw her name on one, on two, on the third. And they were consecutively numbered. Involuntarily she picked them up. Melinda was not very vain, hardly vain at all, but her face reddened as she read:

"Thirty-seven!"

"Sandy hair."

"Never looks neat."

"Puddings are tasteless, but of course the rates per week are cheap."

"What under the sun does he go there for?" (This wondering remark Melinda counted nine times on the three pages.)

There were more. Melinda quit reading and tore the pages into bits. Then, red of face and dejected of mien, she left the house and went home.

Home was a silent place, and deserted, except for her father, who was asleep on the couch in the back parlor. The trunks of Mrs. Jocelyn and of the Downs family had departed that morning. Melinda sat down, feeling the silence and se-



clusion a relief, and cried softly. Her finger hurt intensely, and she felt old and disheartened.

But by supper-time, when she described the scene to her father and Jonathan Burry, she was able to laugh grimly: "I guess there wont be much social intercourse in Oldetown for a few weeks."

Her father sighed, and reached pensively for another cup-cake. "I wish," he remarked wistfully, "that my pension was big enough to obviate the necessity of your keeping boarders, Melinda. Since the house has been quiet these two days, I find my power of making political deductions is much improved."

"So do I," said Melinda.

"So do I," said Jonathan Burry. "I—I mean I wish there need be no more than us three."

Melinda looked at him in surprise.

"I wonder if Alexander Gottlieb will be around to-night," said her father absently. "I got in a little argument last time he was here, and I find I was wrong."

Melinda looked down at her plate. She was aware that Jonathan Burry was eyeing her curiously.

"I rather wondered for a while why he came here," mused her father.

"So did I," said Melinda calmly, "till I learned that he is seeking the nomination for State Representative. There were four of you voters here—till now."

"He—he is a very impressive man," said Jonathan Burry, looking away from Melinda.

"He is," Melinda admitted, "until you learn from Mrs. Bracy, with whom he boards, that she frequently has to bake five pans of rolls to get two whose delicate brown-white precisely satisfies him."

"Ah," said Jonathan Burry. His eyes lightened. And though his face was wrinkled till it seemed a pharmaceutical scrawl, when his eyes lightened, the wrinkles became wonderfully attractive. "Don't you think," he said softly to Melinda, "that you might obviate the necessity of keeping any boarder—but me?"

Melinda looked at him gravely. "I've been keeping boarders fourteen years, Jonathan." Yet her voice was soft.

Jonathan Burry looked down—as though under a reproach. "I've never had anything but my wages," he said sadly, "and I might never have had anything else if I hadn't got to wondering what Alexander Gottlieb was coming here for. That startled me into concocting a new lubricant. I've got it patented. Ed Gilsey says it'll make me rich," —eagerly.

"I'm glad," said Melinda. Then—and her voice took on a tone of almost girlishness: "But—I wouldn't have minded your just having your wages—fourteen years ago."

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# Betcher Boots

by

Jack  
Hines

*THE story of the Indian boy  
and the trail dog he was  
willing to fight for.*

ILLUSTRATED BY  
FRANK B. HOFFMAN

Author of "Juno of Irish  
Hill," etc.

**M**ALAMUTES are peculiar creatures. They have characteristics that are as unalterably pronounced as are the antics of, say, the mule, the chicken, or the mongoose.

Just so sure as a mongoose will kill a snake, as a chicken will cross the road, and a mule will at some unforeseen time suddenly take root on a turnpike,—just so sure will a malamute come to love but one man. It is a love that endures. The trailer may have other owners, masters or drivers, but he loves but one. At some time in the life of the dog he forms his grand attachment, and no welding at white heat can hold stronger.

Barney may not be eligible for the foregoing qualifications, because they fit the pure malamute; but if the tawny trail dog were entered and benched in the malamute classes it would take a shrewd judge indeed, to note that Barney in one or two infinitesimal points slanted back to a maternal ancestor who

came to Nome in the summer of nineteen hundred as cattle-dog-in-chief to a drove of Texas long-horn steers.

Barney first saw the light of day under "the Senator's" work-bench, in the cook-and mess-tent of the "Twenty-seven" Ophir Creek hydraulic crew. His mother—not the Senator's—had been sharp-shooting from the Blue Goose workings, where Ophir cataracted into the Neukluk, all the way up stream, taking in all stops, until along the first part of August she sniped her way into the Senator's world of pots, pans and cleavers—ten good miles from where she had started when the sluicing water began running in June.

As far as known, Barney's mother had no other name but the casual one she may have acquired at her last stopping place. At "Fifteen," the main camp of the Wild Goose Company, Harry Leland dubbed her "Bum;" at "Nineteen," where the clean-up crew scuffed ankle-deep in pure gold,—yes, and in a four

foot bottom at that,—“Bum” was changed to “Swipes.”

Cooks were blind to her beautiful wolf markings or ignorant of her perfect breeding conformation; and the winter trailmen who saw in her a breeder of sweep-stake speeders were too busy in the rush and hustle of a fleeting open-spell to take any time from their duties to house or care for the sleek roving malamute.

But when she shambled her way to “Twenty-seven,” the plaint of her eyes and the rolling weight on her slender racy legs were too much for the Senator, and he made her welcome and comfortable right under his nose, in the heavenly atmosphere of simmering soup-stock and boiling meat. Again her name changed; the Senator christened her “Cleopatra,” because, as he said, the gang called him a “mark” for letting her run him the way she did.

Well, along they came: three little girlie puppies and Barney, the only irregularly marked one of the litter; he was a tan. The cattle-herder no doubt had made a profound impression on Barney’s great-great-grandfather, because here she was, in color at least, four generations past, plastered all over what promised to be a dog that would pile up a mark for trail conquests that the dog-men of Alaska would be shooting at for some time to come.

When the pups began to show their cuteness and inclination to romp and play, a lot of queer things happened in the “Twenty-seven” mess-tent. Beans were served well sugared instead of salted. A big bowl of delicious curried rice was given to the men—only the curry was mustard! The tea-pot contained pure hot water. It was evident that the Senator had things to attend to that interfered seriously with the job he was getting seven and a half a day for. Many of the slant-headed pit-men ate the Senator’s mistakes and lunged back for more—they had weird stomachs, some of those shovel stiffs.

In the middle of September the girl doggies were stricken one after the other with a deadly scourge of the Arctic dogs, and the Senator—poor soul—in his ignorance could do nothing to check its

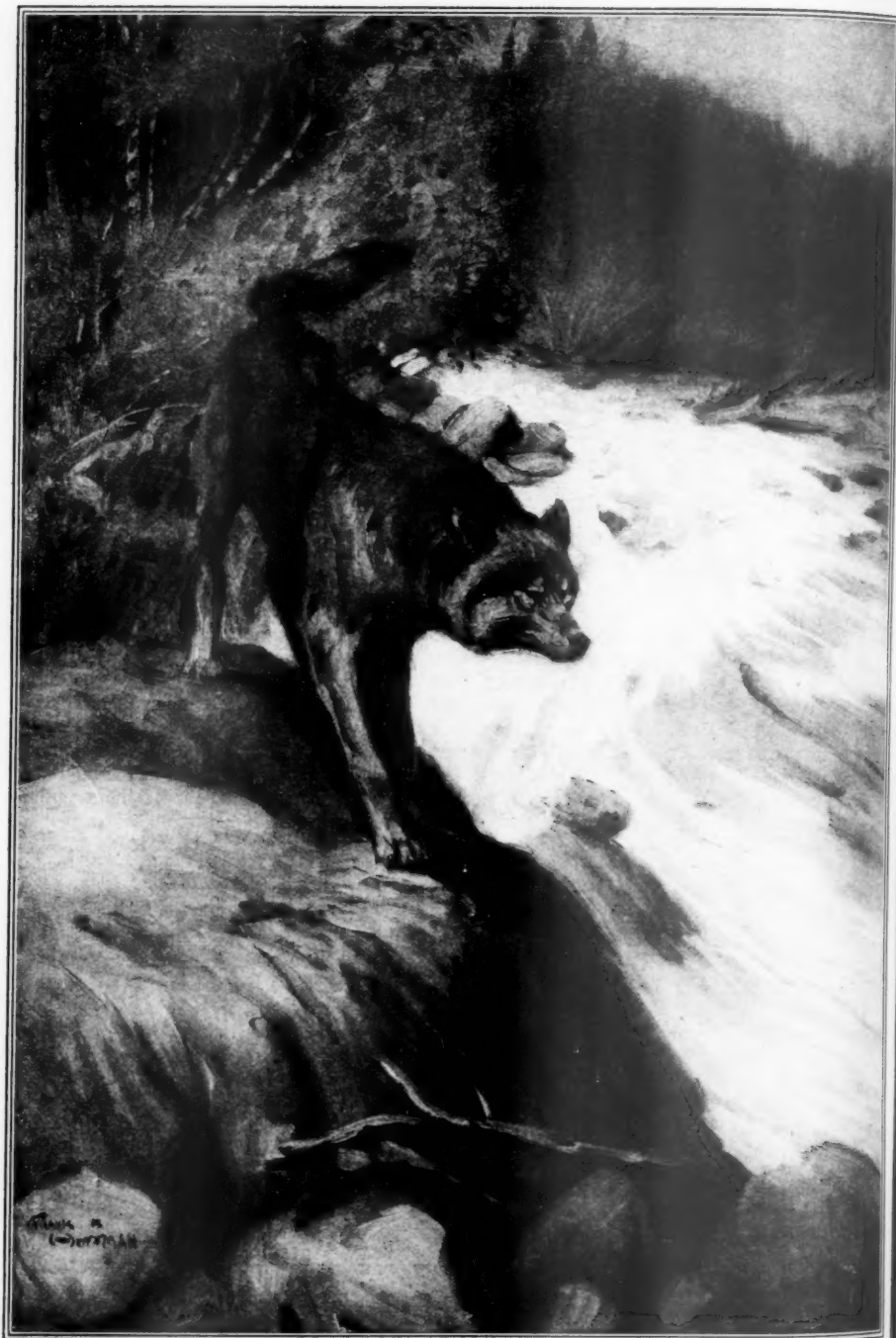
fatal ravage. So, rather than have some one bitten and perhaps poisoned, Cleopatra’s female progeny were released to the infinite reaches of the Dog Heaven, each with the aid of a forty-four slug for its little malamute soul. Cleopatra and the Senator were dejected, but they did manage to extract some solace from the care and nursing bestowed upon the sisterless Barney. The distemper seemed to skip him entirely. He was just a hale, healthy cub, the one out of the proverbial four that the plague did not attack. It may have been that tough buck-skin strain that told in him.

ONE evening, at about the time of long shadows, Wolf Ladue stopped before the tent door. Barney recoiled with his back to the door, every hair on edge, as if sensing something unclean and menacing in the sinister figure that eyed him with covetous appraisal. With Ladue were five heavily laden dogs—each wearily pack-saddled and looking worn and hungry. ’Twas plain that they had a hard summer instead of the well-earned rest to which they were entitled after a long winter of sled-trailing.

Wolf was a tough man. He was notorious as a brutal dog puncher. Of the usual prospectors’ pack-saddle he had none; the dogs did all of his packing! His entire burden consisted of a vicious-bitted black-snake with a loaded handle which swung sashlike across his chest. Not one of his miserable dogs was innocent of its bite or scar.

The Senator, being a summer bird of passage, as those are termed who do not face the rigors of the Arctic winter, saw naught in Wolf Ladue but a man who knew and understood the northern dogs; he knew nothing of the infamy which the mention of the name Wolf Ladue suggested to all of the pioneers and sourdoughs of the entire Council City district; so he poured out the lament of his heart in the telling of the extermination of the little sick cubs.

Wolf hearkened with narrowing eyes when the Senator told of his apprehension regarding Barney. “What should I do to be sure that Barney wont get caught like the rest of the pups? What precautions shall I take?”



Barney's mother had been sharpshooting from the Blue Goose workings, all the way up-stream.

"Give him to me," said Wolf. "I'll take him down to my camp on Dutch Creek and dope him so's he'll never go nuts and you'll have a good dog; then I'll bring him back to you in about ten days and he'll be all O. K. for the big hike I suppose you'll be taking to Seattle and the outside."

"Gee, that's the way to talk. Say, mister, you make a big hit with me; take him along; I'm worried sick about that Barney. I tell you wot, I'm so stuck on him that I'm not so sharp for taking him out, because I've heard that these malamutes don't live outside. So if you cure him or fix him up so that he wont get it, you keep him! That's how much I love that pup: I'd rather see him in a good home, which I can't give him, than have him myself and have him go 'bats' or somethin'."

And in this manner Barney passed from the kindest pilgrim in the North to the ownership of the meanest man permitted to breathe its pure air. But the pup felt no particular pang at the parting from the Senator; after all, there was nothing that the camp cook did particularly to endear the little fellow to him. At Barney's age the food was of more importance to him than where it came from or who fed it to him. Had he also contracted the disease that did for his sisters, and had the Senator nursed him through a three weeks' or a month's siege of sickness, Barney would have formed his first real attachment, no doubt. But the first real thrill that Barney had experienced so far was the negative one that overwhelmed him at sight of Wolf Ladue. And now he knew that the fear he felt in his little being for the man who carried him was not without foundation. He sensed that the flinty tone in the voice of Ladue was intended as a rebuke for something he had done; what that thing was, of course Barney knew not. But he did know that he was being abused.

Before Wolf had reached his camp on Dutch Creek he had begun to torment and torture the tawny ball of fur that reposed in timid excitement in the bend of his arm. The other dogs of the pack-string were curious and lagged behind, sniffing at their driver's burden. For

this presumption on their parts the black snake would unfold and cut its venomous way to their hides, usually with an accompanying curse that stung far deeper than the leather.

"Git on, you! Wotcher hangin' back for, hey? Go on, you, Prince—" Prince had stopped to lick a bleeding foot, had just settled down under his bulging saddle bags when—*swish—bang*—like the crack of a rifle the rawhide tongue cut his back with cruel precision. Prince struggled to his feet and plodded on, crying pitifully. "Hey, you, Buck," yelled Wolf, "git on or I'll slap it to you too."

Then Barney came in for a savage shake. "Say, you purp, you're beginning to raise Cain around here already. Well, I'll cure you of any chance to go dips; you just wont have time to think of the bat route. I'm a-goin' to shape you for the winter so's you kin pull alongside of the rest of them."

So before Barney had time to think of becoming ill, he found that all of his spare time and attention, and a great deal of energy, were centered on a broad webbed breast-plate, with understraps which met immediately under his tiny chest and diverged from there upwards to the ridge of his spine. At this point a big metal swivel-snap dug into his bones more and more, according to the effort Barney put forth to free himself of it. But worst of all was the iron pick-head that dragged along behind him wherever he went, and if perchance, as often happened, it got caught on a rock or a willow stump, the pup's anguish, as it tried frantically to free itself, was pathetic. Wolf stood by, watching the twisting and straining puppy at these times, swinging the black-snake and adding further torment by saying, "That'll learn you to always think of pullin', you little devil. There's only one thing I want from you, young feller, and that's work; see, work!"

The spirit in the growing dog was hard to down, however determined Ladue was to break it. Barney made a friend of Chief—a big black-and-white wheeler—and even though handicapped by the drag weight, the pup managed to infect the old veteran of the trail with his prankish spirit until he permitted

himself to be rolled over on his back and played horse with for the young malamute.

**I**N January news came to Council City of a big gold strike in the Kugruk River district. It was a well authenticated report. All who could—and several who couldn't—equipped themselves for the two-hundred-mile journey to the ice-bound coast of Kotzebue Sound. The trail led through the dreaded Death Valley of Seward Peninsula, up to the headwaters of the Kewalick river, thence down to Candle City and from there either across the Virginia Creek cut-off, or down to the Sound by a direct line to Moran's roadhouse, which marked the Kotzebue shore on a split dividing the Sound from Kewalick Lagoon.

Ladue was one of the most feverish of the stampedeers. He could live on practically nothing, and he was of the type that expected the same from his dogs. From them he exacted most unreasonable efforts; in return he gave them cruelty and next to nothing to eat. They seldom received cooked food from him. 'Twas only when a stop was made at some Indian or Eskimo camp that the Ladue dogs knew the ecstasy of boiled fish or meat. There it was fed them with the other dogs as a matter of course.

By this time Barney, although only half grown, was a beautiful upstanding specimen of the Arctic trail dog. At the stand he was a superb picture, well muscled front legs close together, his padded feet set as a ballet dancer poised before a terpsichorean flight. His head he held erect, with snapping eyes and pointed ears alert and unafraid—except when Ladue came near him. His back was well furred and short coupled; it was almost completely covered by the rich brush which folded close over it when he was in high humor, or drooped, touching the ground, when he was fear-stricken. This latter condition of Barney's brush was rare, however; usually it was rampant, in perpetual evidence that his riotous soul fire burned undimmed, notwithstanding a hard master.

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His training with the dragging pick-head stood him in good hand now as he raced along to keep free of Chief and Buck, who ever pressed closely at his heels. Often his legs could not keep the pace set by the lead dog; then he would be literally carried along on the taut lead coupling. At these times his heart fluttered in his six-months-old breast as he endeavored to escape the cut of the black snake which exploded about his ears, almost driving him crazy. He could feel that it was taking the heart out of him. It was breaking him; that's what it was doing—breaking him!

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**O**NE evening as the dropping sun shot its lancing rays across the glistening ice, Betcher-Boots, the Indian-of-all-work of the Nelson camp at Alder Creek, was stirring a great pottage of steaming rice and salmon. A row of white teeth gleamed in a copper face as the boy thought of the crack dogs of his master's team, each with his pan of savory food before him after a run up from the new diggings in the Kugruk, about twelve miles from the home camp. Betcher-Boots was in sole charge of the camp. The majestic hush of the North filled his Indian soul as he offered a silent sundown tribute to his gods. He was grateful for the friendship and patronage of Andy Nelson, his chief, and also for Walter Wells and George Hicks, who with Andy maintained a three-cornered partner and friendship. Betcher-Boots was glad to be the servant and friend of that trio. And the Indian loved the "ky-moo-gans" individually and collectively, from Casey, the Siberian leader, to Cäsar, the stout wheel dog.

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The team and the cursing passed on toward the new diggings. For some time Betcher-Boots kept staring at the spot on the trail where he had first seen the Ladue team; as he looked, he was aware that a tawny, gaunt-looking beast of some sort had entered the orbit of his vision and was standing there sniffing the air and looking at him intently. In the failing light it was not unlike a polar or a gray wolf—the light in which it was seen was weird and prankish. Betcher-Boots ran to the cabin and returned in a second holding a Krag on the beast, which now advanced timidly. Suddenly the Indian dropped the rifle; he recognized a limping, exhausted malamute—half grown, half starved and "all in."

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Suddenly he came to a full stop; he caught a smell in the air which filled his lungs with a divine aroma from Betcher-Boots' stewing colander. He went to the source of the smells as in a dream. It was the first time in his life that he had ever approached anything alone. He was now on his own. He was coming up on something strange—alone, but it all smelled so good that he presently advanced unafraid.

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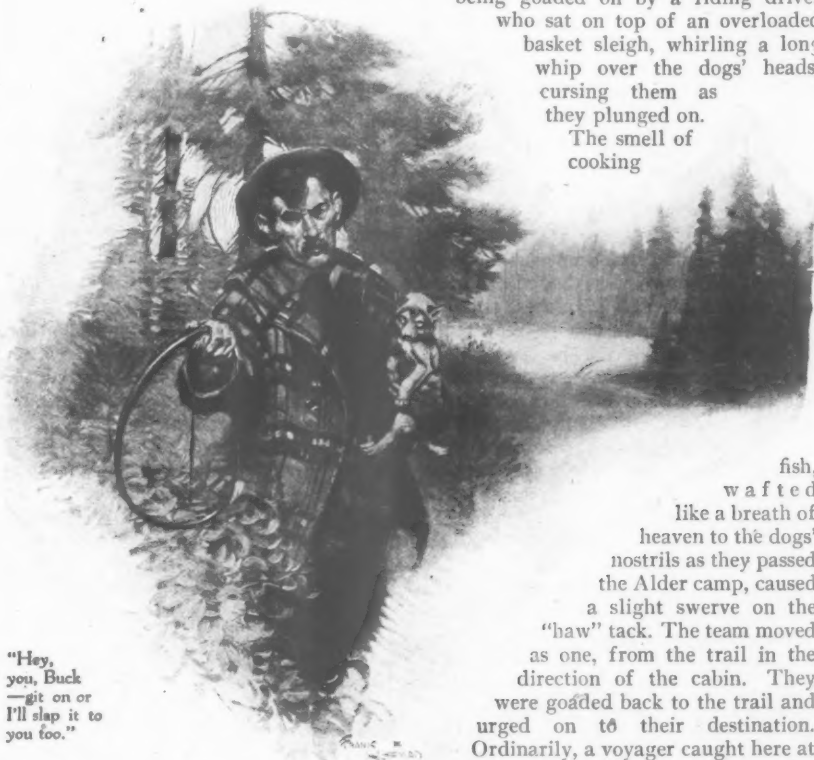
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One day, as the Indian was returning to Alder Creek, he gee'd Barney off the trail to permit a five-dog string to pass. It was Wolf Ladue and his team returning from the Kugruk stampede. Wolf recognized in the developed brilliant malamute the Barney he had abandoned in just about this same locality six weeks back.

"Hey whoa!" he yelled at the dogs. "Hey whoa" to them was always a welcome command. They dropped in their tracks, steaming and spent.

"Here you, Betcher-Boots, where'd you get that dog? That's my dog! Come here, Barney." Wolf made a dive for the dog, and Barney plunged ahead to the trail in a panic of flight.

Betcher-Boots held back the sleigh and commanded Barney, "Down boy, down." The dog obeyed the voice he had come to adore. Wolf reached down to unhook Barney from his harness, but he had no more than stooped to do so when he felt his air-supply suddenly choked off. Fingers of steel encircled his throat. He straightened up and locked with the powerful Indian boy. Both fell in a fierce, silent, struggle to the snow.

Anyone but Betcher-Boots no doubt would have relinquished Barney to his old owner. But Betcher-Boots was determined his pet should never return to this man. The Indian had felt that the dog was a cast-off from the Ladue string, because this was not the only case when Ladue had left a poor, useless animal an outcast on the mid-winter trail.

THE fighting blood that so long had lain dormant in Betcher-Boots was suddenly roused to the boiling pitch, every last atom of it. Everything he had ever heard of Wolf Ladue's baseness was true. It was typical of him to want the dog now, although he had beaten Barney to within an inch of his poor life and when the beast could move no more had thrown him to the mercy of the Arctic. The right of possession had no place in the Indian's thoughts; there could be no justice, white man's or red-skin's, that would permit a brute to abandon a dog half dead to the trail

and then sanction that man's taking the dog from the one who saved it and brought it back to life again. Indeed no!

Betcher-Boots' grip tightened. The Indian had no idea of giving quarter; or if he did have the merciful inclination, he was past all consideration of it. Wolf's efforts to overcome him were as the futile resistance of a child.

When Betcher-Boots finally arose from the snow, all of Wolf's dogs swung round from the trail. As one dog—rather, as one wolf—they pounced upon the prostrate form of their tyrant master and began tearing him to shreds.

The Indian saw that they were venting their pent-up rage on a lifeless body. They had all reverted in an instant to their wild wolfish type. Barney cowered at the Indian's heels, whimpering and afraid.

Betcher-Boots beat off the dogs with the loaded end of Wolf's black-snake and lifted their dead master into his own sleigh. He unhooked the Ladue leader and placed Barney in that position, letting the dog he supplanted run free. Attaching his own little Yukon sleigh to the basket sleigh, the Indian retracked to Moran's to give himself up to Judge Solomon, who sat there as United States Commissioner.

BETCHER-BOOTS told a straightforward story to the Judge, omitting nothing, and next morning when court was called His Honor, from the bench at the "bar" end of Moran's roadhouse, spoke the following words:

"In the matter of the decease and finding of the body of Wolf Ladue, and the bringing in of said body, the Court will state that it has appointed itself administrator of the estate and effects of the deceased and has decreed that the entire trail outfit, including six dogs, sleigh, robes, excepting, however, one loaded black-snake whip, shall pass forever to have and to hold to that good Indian—although alive—named Subchooahk and called Betcher-Boots.

"It is further decreed that the said black-snake whip be buried with the body of Wolf Ladue, and may the Good Lord have mercy, Amen."

# Humanizing Mr. Winsby

*A two-part story, in which we learn how love, and the playfulness of circumstance, made a regular person of the Sugar-Beet King of San Geronimo.*

By Peter B. Kyne

Author of "Sauce for the Gander," "The Handshake Agreement," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN NEWTON HOWITT

**M**R. HORACE G. WINSBY was the walking anachronism of San Geronimo, but he is such no longer. Midway of these tenses, past and present, lies our story.

In the matter of mere physical bulk, Mr. Winsby was of the average mercantile proportions—yet he was at once the biggest and the littlest man in San Geronimo. In point of age he was thirty-two—a mere youth as men rate their years; yet he had the hard finished soul of a business man of fifty. He was rich in worldly goods and gear; nevertheless the lone hobo, cooking his mulligan under a railway bridge, had more friends than Horace G. Winsby.

Mr. Winsby was the descendant of mixed ancestry, in which a very noticeable preponderance of manufacturers of textile goods in Worcester, Mass., prevailed, for which reason he may, perhaps, be excused for having an anachronism. For Mr. Winsby was a throw-back.

For some ungodly reason, Mr. Winsby's paternal grandfather had wearied of a sure thing and a prosaic existence in Worcester. Perhaps he harked back to a militant ancestor with hot, restless feet, for quite suddenly he declared for a wider horizon and journeyed west with the Argonauts in '49. Later he married a Castilian beauty whose grandee father had given her the San Geronimo valley for a wedding dowry. The result of that

union had been Mr. Winsby's father, who, while at Harvard, wedded the daughter of a New Hampshire farmer. Our Mr. Winsby had been the sole issue of that marriage—three-quarters Yankee and one-quarter Spanish—and, like his paternal grandfather, he had bred back, clear across the continent.

From the warm Latin blood of his great-grandfather, Mr. Winsby inherited good looks and instinctively charming manners, but none of the ancient California spirit of prodigality, tolerance and romance. The old grandee had never known how to figure interest and would have scorned to figure it had he known how. Not so with Horace G. Winsby, however. No matter what he did, Mr. Winsby never failed to consider first the effect of that action on his bank account. If it would pay him to do a thing, he did it; if it would not pay him, he did not do it. It is probably for this reason that at thirty-two he was unmarried and had never been in love.

**SAN GERONIMO** is a California town of fifteen hundred and thirty-three inhabitants, according to the last census report, and twenty-five hundred according to the secretary of its Chamber of Commerce. The town takes its name from the San Geronimo valley, in the heart of which it nestles, and the San Geronimo valley is the fairest spot in California. It is noted for its output of beet sugar and Mr. Winsby, the two

being synonymous to such an extent that throughout the south central part of California, Horace G. Winsby was known as "the sugar-beet king of San Geronimo."

Mr. Winsby owned and operated two large sugar-beet factories, and was president and principal stockholder of the San Geronimo Savings and Loan Society; he owned the finest public garage and machine-shop in town and had the agency for a certain light, cheap, efficient automobile, very popular with the farmers. He owned the only department store in San Geronimo, most of the unoccupied real estate and considerable of that occupied. He owned ten thousand acres of the finest land in the valley, his father having cut up the remainder of the estate into small farms and sold them to colonists. On this great domain, where he raised hundreds of thousands of tons of sugar beets annually, Mr. Winsby dwelt with his vasals in a long, low, adobe hacienda erected in the seventeenth century. It had wide, cool, red-tiled verandas, with a magnificent patio in the rear, and was one of the show places of the country. While Mr. Winsby possessed several automobiles, he preferred to drive from his ancestral home to his office in San Geronimo behind a team of bays, each of which could step a mile in twenty.

In no sense of the word was Mr. Winsby a hayseed. He was a graduate of the state university; he belonged to several of the best clubs in San Francisco and patronized only those tailors who could assure him of "the very latest from New York." In the matter of political beliefs he was still in the Dark Ages; he read the newspapers and believed too much of what he read therein. He had never kissed a baby or felt his cold heart leap at the sight of an old friend across the street; he had never given away any money because he feared he might pauperize people, and there wasn't a girl in the whole San Geronimo valley that would have married him on a bet. He didn't care. He anticipated no difficulty in procuring a wife when he desired one. Meantime he was a business man and too greatly occupied with more

important matters. He told himself he had no time to marry—until one bright day a girl rode into San Geronimo on a big brown thoroughbred; whereupon Mr. Winsby changed his mind.

He was about to enter the little, one-story tiled-roof building which constituted his office, when he heard her coming. There was a hundred-foot wooden bridge across the arroyo at the head of Main Street. A brown thoroughbred seemed to take it in three thunderous jumps; there was a spatter of gravel in the street, the squawk of frightened hens abandoning their dust baths, the sudden scurry for safety of two vagrant hound dogs reposing in the middle of the street—and she was past.

"These infernal city visitors," murmured Mr. Winsby wrathfully, and glared after her. He saw her pull up in front of the post office, dismount and enter; so, since he disapproved of anybody riding at such speed through San Geronimo without consulting him, he made up his mind to go to the post office and see whose horse this reckless young woman bestrode—for he knew every horse in the valley. He would then write a letter to the young woman's host and threaten formal complaint to the village constable.

She was standing on the sidewalk reading her mail when he arrived, and he had just time for a most cursory examination of rider and horse before she mounted and jogged sedately out of town. Mr. Winsby, however, had discovered several things in the interim. By the brand and blood lines he recognized the horse as one from the Chula Vista rancho, formerly the property of Mike O'Grady, now deceased. By the same evidence he recognized in the rider the heir to Mike O'Grady's forty-thousand-acre cattle range in the rolling country north of the San Geronimo. Mike O'Grady had been red-headed, arrogant, reckless and a lover of fast horses. Mr. Winsby could not remember having seen Miss Patricia O'Grady before, but he had no difficulty in recognizing her now. She bore a strong resemblance to her sire, although Mr. Winsby could not recall that he had ever credited the cattle man with large, ten-

der eyes, set wide apart, with the lids drooping a little, lazily; with a patrician nose and a tanned and slightly freckled face with a warm, healthy glow seeping up through the tan. But she had a large, generous, humorous mouth like her father's, and her hair was a reddish brown.

For the first time in all his gray life Mr. Winsby was aware that he liked reddish brown hair, particularly when it crinkled a little, on a girl five feet five and a half inches tall and weighing one hundred and thirty-seven pounds, exclusive of the little brass spurs on the number four tan boots. Neither had it occurred to him previously that girls about twenty-three years old are the nicest, for the reason that at such an age the average girl may be depended upon to begin exhibiting signs of human intelligence.

MR. WINSBY scratched his ear and decided to keep off the O'Grady right of way. He retraced his steps to his office, and as he entered, to the vast surprise of old man Cattermole, his bookkeeper and quasi-manager, he was whistling "Turkey in the Straw." Cattermole peered curiously at him from under the bookrack on his tall desk.

"Must see a bank-roll in sight," he mused, but an instant later his employer disillusioned him.

"I just saw old Mike O'Grady's girl riding up the street, Cattermole," Mr. Winsby remarked. "Do you know if she has taken over active management of the Chula Vista Rancho?"

"Bless your soul, sir," old Mr. Cattermole declared, "Patsy would manage anything. Yes, sir, she's making them all step lively over on the Tepisque these days."

"She's red, like Mike, and rides like the devil," said Mr. Winsby. "I don't like her."

Mr. Cattermole was ancient but he had not yet left his dreams behind him. He smiled the snug little smile of a satisfied old fox who knows what he knows, for immediately following his declaration of hostilities, Mr. Winsby stroked the office cat as she lay on top of the safe, the while he hummed aloud the

craziest song he had ever heard, to-wit:

He'd have to get under,  
Get out and get under,  
(To fix up his automobile).

Just before leaving for his hacienda at five o'clock that day, Mr. Winsby paused beside old Cattermole's desk to draw on his driving gloves.

"Her hair isn't red, Cattermole," he said; "it's auburn."

Mr. Cattermole nodded—he could not trust himself to speak—and Mr. Winsby departed for home, in blissful ignorance of the fact that Mr. Cattermole was now quite convinced that it was springtime in the wintry heart of his youthful boss.

"I'll have to tell Patsy about this," the old rascal chuckled into his ledger. "That human fish is in love at last—and with the last girl in the world that would think of marrying him. Whe-w-w-w! What a beating he's got coming!"

IT was a month before Mr. Winsby met the author of all the light in the universe. She rode down to his hacienda one Sunday morning and presented him with a bill for one hundred and eight dollars, his share of certain repairs she had ordered made to a ramshackle picket fence that marked the northern boundary of the Winsby holdings and the southern boundary of the Chula Vista Rancho. She rode right into his patio, where he was smoking his first after-breakfast cigar—alone—and enjoying it as usual, and said to him:

"I'm Miss O'Grady, of the Chula Vista rancho. I have a little bill for one hundred and eight dollars against you—your share of repairs to the fence between our joint properties."

Mr. Winsby had been stunned momentarily, first by the vision on horseback and second by her consummate nerve in riding a horse into his patio. However, whenever anybody talked of taking money away from him he invariably came to life in a hurry. He eyed her belligerently and said with the calm urbanity with which he called loans:

"I was not notified that the boundary fence was in a state of disrepair,



Miss O'Grady. Indeed, to the best of my knowledge no repairs were at all necessary. If they were, I should most certainly have been notified of the fact and requested to do my share of the repairs—"

"Take my word for it, neighbor," said Patricia,—and launched a smile that played more havoc in the Winsby heart than a shell from a German siege gun makes in an old cathedral,—"those repairs were very necessary. I remember Dad's notifying you several times that if you didn't maintain your half of the fence in better order he wouldn't be responsible for his cattle breaking through and damaging your crops. You're a busy man—so I attended to it for you, and your share of the tariff is a hundred and eight dollars. Please kick in."

Her slang horrified him. "But I have no means of verifying the bill," he protested. "How do I know that this represents an equitable adjustment of the total cost of those repairs—"

"You're amazingly frank," Patricia interrupted frigidly.

"I'm a business man, Miss O'Grady. I meant no offense, but these matters—"

Patricia held up a freckled little hand. "Look here, old settler," she said, "I spent two hundred and sixteen dollars putting that fence in order, and your share of the same is a hundred and eight. You haven't got writer's cramp or paralysis of the right hand, have you?"

"I certainly have not," he retorted icily.

"Then, a check, I prithee—and please don't argue with a lady, Mr. Winsby. It isn't dignified. I believe you think I'm a bandit," she added, and tried the effect of another smile. The unfortunate Winsby felt the icicles melting in his heart; he felt himself slipping and forced a genial laugh.

"All the O'Grady tribe were," he declared boldly. "However, I surrender; not because I think I owe you the money but because we might as well keep holy the Sabbath day and I aim to love my neighbor as myself—"

He paused, blushing at the trap his daring had led him into. Patricia laughed in his face.

"You got into deep water close to the

shore there, Moneybags," she taunted him.

"I'll have Cattermole send you a check, Miss O'Grady. Would you like to look over the Winsby hacienda? I rather pride myself on my home, you know—to such an extent, indeed, that I wish you'd ride that confounded brute of a horse out of my Shasta daisies. He's raising the mischief with them."

She nodded and rode out of the patio. He followed. Two hours later he was driving her home behind his team of trotters, while one of his men followed on her horse.

The following morning old Mr. Cattermole chuckled as he opened a letter from Patricia O'Grady.

I rooked him out of \$108.00 for fence repairs. Did it in five minutes, so there must be something to what you tell me. Poor Dad had been carrying that bill against your boss for more than a year before he died. He despaired of collecting it. I think I shocked Mr. Winsby terribly. Goodness knows, I tried hard enough. He's funny, but he isn't such a fool with women as you seem to think. Stand by for the next broadside. I might as well settle this fence question for keeps while I have him going.

Sincerely,

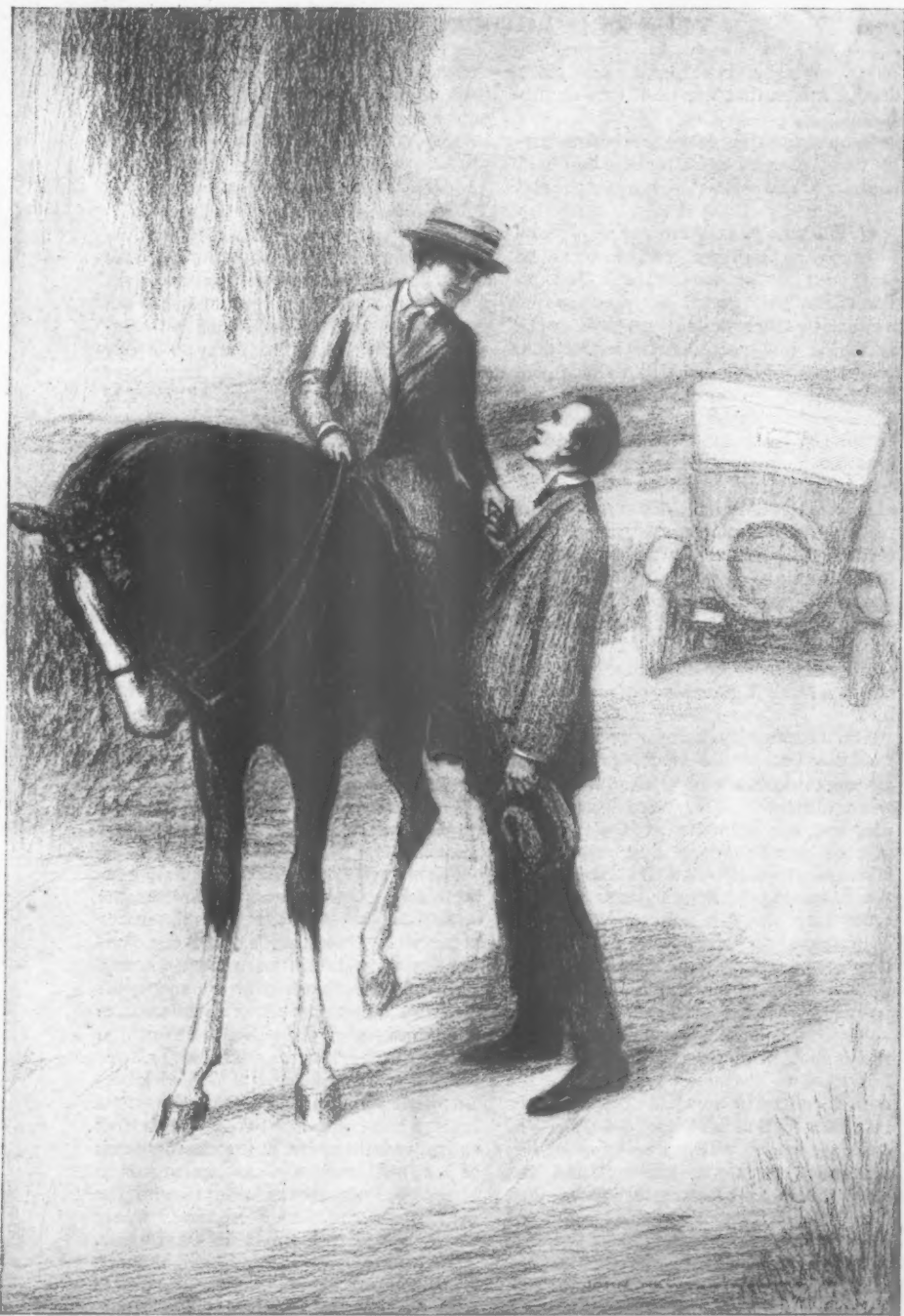
PAT.

Time passed, and presently to Horace G. Winsby came a bill for twenty-nine hundred and some dollars, together with a friendly little note from Patricia informing him that any picket fence that had done duty for fifty years deserved to be retired on a pension; so she had torn down ten miles of it and erected a hog-tight wire fence instead. She hoped she might be favored with a check at his convenience.

Mr. Winsby's first impulse was to write Patricia O'Grady a letter telling her, substantially, to get off her foot. The thing was totally irregular, and even old Cattermole, most genial of men, recognized the injustice of it, for he said, when Mr. Winsby aired his opinion of the outrage:

"What do you expect from the Irish brat? Wasn't her grandfather all but hanged for rustling? If I were you I'd repudiate any obligation in the matter of that fence."





He had a pretty well defined notion that he interested Patsy, but whether the pleased attention which she exhibited was analogous to a budding love or the interest which anyone may feel in any queer creature of the animal kingdom, it would have taken a shrewder person and one more versed in the wiles of the gentler sex than was Mr. Winsby, to determine.

Mr. Winsby bent upon his office drudge a look that was positively frightful.

"You may safely leave this entire matter to my discretion, Cattermole," he said coldly. "Send Miss O'Grady a check."

**M**ORE time passed. Horace G. Winsby was as cautious with love as he was with investments. He called on Patricia at her ranch as often as she would let him; he did his best to be agreeable and succeeded far better than he knew. He had a pretty well defined notion that he interested Patsy, but whether the pleased attention which she exhibited was analogous to a budding love or the interest which anyone may feel in any queer creature of the animal kingdom, it would have taken a shrewder person and one more versed in the wiles of the gentler sex than was Mr. Winsby, to determine.

For Mr. Winsby, despite the advantages of his great wealth, was a small-town man with small-town ideas and a small-town way of doing business and making love. There was no romance in him.

On the contrary, as everybody knows, romance lies in the hearts of all who answer to the name of O'Grady. Hence, when ultimately, Mr. Winsby made his proposal, he approached the delicate task as he would have approached any business proposition. After dilating on the financial advantages that might accrue from the merging of their joint holdings and the consequent elimination of boundary disputes and divided responsibility in the matter of fence repairs, he asked Patricia to marry him.

Throughout the entire speech he carefully avoided telling Patricia that he loved her to distraction; throughout his entire courtship he had neglected to inform her that she was beautiful—in consequence of which Patsy turned her tender brown eyes on him and told him she was very, very sorry to have to hurt him, but the fact of the matter was his suggestion was not possible of consideration. She trusted he would not press the matter further. He said he would not, and was singularly quiet for five minutes. Finally he said he guessed he'd go home,

and he did. Moreover, he did not come back, for the light had suddenly gone out of the world and it was winter again in Mr. Winsby's heart.

**W**ASN'T it Longfellow who said:

"Thus misfortunes come not singly?" It appeared to Mr. Winsby during the succeeding six months that the world had gone completely to the devil. One of his trotting horses stepped in a gopher hole and broke a leg; a belligerent bull belonging to Patsy O'Grady broke through the line fence that Patsy built, came down into the valley and killed a young, blue-blooded and expensive bull belonging to Mr. Winsby, who lacked the courage to send Patsy a bill for damages. A piece of ancient tiling slid off the roof of the hacienda and killed his foreman; the widow sued for ten thousand dollars damages; and a jury of twelve good men and true, who disliked Mr. Winsby, awarded her the sum she claimed. He contracted chicken pox, and as a finale to his manifold miseries the confounded Administration took up that bogie of all sound business men—the tariff—and began to tinker with it. Had Mr. Winsby been consulted by the Almighty at the time He framed the Ten Commandments, an amendment to the original motion would most certainly have been suggested, to wit: "Thou shalt not tariff tinker."

No sooner was Mr. Winsby half over the chicken pox than he transmitted the disease to his congressmen and senator in a letter protesting against the contemplated raid on the sugar industry. He explained that he owned and operated two beet-sugar factories in the San Geronimo valley (he was almost tempted to add, "of which I am king!"), employing a large number of skilled laborers; that any tinkering with the sugar tariff with a view to lifting the lid off entirely would result in the closing down of his two factories, a consequent loss to Labor and an incalculable loss to the farmers of the San Geronimo, nearly all of whom specialized in sugar beets.

Preposterous as it may seem, the Administration breezed right along and took the cover off the sugar bowl—whereupon Mr. Winsby sat down at his roll-top

desk and wrote a column and a half interview with himself for the San Geronimo *Herald*, wherein he announced his retirement from the sugar-beet industry—as he phrased it—“until the country should return to its senses.”

His abdication as the sugar-beet king of San Geronimo had been prompted by several reasons. In all that country he loved nobody but Patricia O'Grady (and she didn't know it); nobody loved him (and he knew it), in consequence of which he had a grouch against the world; he had a good deal of money out in call loans and first mortgages, due and overdue, and if now, just as the sugar-beet crop was about to be harvested, he should sit back in the breeching and sulk, he would, in the language of the classic, “put the San Geronimo on the fritz.”

He would let these people know just how much he meant to them; if he did not buy their beet crop, they could not sell elsewhere, for every beet-sugar manufacturer in the country would, in the first flush of panic at profits cut in two, close down and wait for the country to “come to its senses.” Moreover, Mr. Winsby owned the only factories in San Geronimo; at the best, the price of sugar-beets would drop to a point where the farmers could not afford the railroad freight and wagon haulage necessary to transport the crop to any factories that might elect to keep on running until the crop should be cleaned up.

The fact of the matter was, Mr. Winsby coveted a great deal more of the San Geronimo valley than his father had left him. He wanted to buy more land and he didn't purpose being held up when he was ready to buy. It was none of his business if certain farmers failed to meet their mortgages when the same fell due—and by reason of his domination of the San Geronimo Savings and Loan Society he would see to it that no extensions were granted. He considered it a smart stroke of business to create hard times in the Valley for a year or two, in order that he might discourage his neighbors and depress land values. There were at least half a dozen nice holdings he might get at a sheriff's sale for fifty per cent of their real value,

and he purposed getting them if he could.

Mr. Winsby's interview with himself was duly printed in the *Herald*, for he held a chattel mortgage on the *Herald* plant. The announcement of his stand created a panic; then wiser counsel prevailed, and the farmers decided that Horace G. Winsby was “running a sandy,” that he was merely trying to depress the price of sugar beets. It was observed that he was handling his own crop at the factories.

When a month passed, however, and the crop was almost harvested, Mr. Winsby had another interview with himself, in which he graciously advised the farmers he had betrayed to invest in hogs and feed the hogs on the sugar beets they could not sell. Better to do that, he argued, than let the crop rot! And having wotted the which and placed the burden of his infamy on the Administration, Mr. Winsby proceeded to call a few loans and begin suit for the foreclosure of a few overdue mortgages, alleging as an excuse for his acts that “business was business and money extremely tight.”

Before three months had passed he had bought a few farms at ten dollars per acre less than their actual value, and by and large, was doing nicely—until he foreclosed a mortgage on a temperamental farmer from the south of Italy, one whom a residence of twenty years in the land of the free and the home of the brave had not cured of a racial tendency to make reprisal after his own nature and inclination. This mercurial person put nine buckshot down each barrel of an old muzzle-loading shot-gun, declared an open season on Horace G. Winsby, came to Mr. Winsby's office on Main Street, poked the shotgun through the window and pulled both triggers.

Fortunately for Mr. Winsby the percussion caps that ignited the charge were damp and hung fire; perhaps the powder was a little stale. At any rate, the ex-king dodged behind the safe and suffered nothing worse than the total ruin of a new derby hat, the most awful fright imaginable and a subsequent outlay of twelve dollars and fifty cents to a plasterer and paper-hanger to repair

the breach made by the buckshot in the office wall.

CATTERMOLE had been part of the estate willed Mr. Winsby by his father. For some time the sugar-beet king had been carrying Cattermole in a list of doubtful assets, but the old book-keeper justified his retention now by going war mad. He dispersed the Italian with such handy weapons as a glass paper-weight, two inkwells, red and black, the petty cash book, six large chunks of coal, a check perforator, the poker and a seventy-five-cent alarm clock. He had come late to the office a few times recently, and Mr. Winsby had bought him the alarm clock that very day, with the significant reminder that he (Cattermole) had better wake up if he intended getting along in the world.

When the Italian was in full flight, Mr. Winsby ventured out from behind the safe. He was pale, of course, (who wouldn't be?) but if there was one thing his Yankee blood had brought him, it was a deal of cool courage.

"Blew the top off my derby hat," he said laconically. Then he took down the telephone, called up his department-store manager and ordered him to send over a seven and a quarter golf cap, gray preferred.

"Horace," said Mr. Cattermole, in his excitement forgetting the respect due the creator of the pay-roll, "I was afraid something like this might happen. It almost happened. This should be a lesson to you, Horace, my boy. You have ruined that Eytalian by foreclosing on his miserable twenty-acre farm; you've left the poor, bewildered devil with a wife and a thousand kids on his hands and nothing to feed them on—and no jury in this county would have convicted him if he'd busted you wide open. Good heavens, Horace, have a heart. Your father wasn't that way. If you're going to subordinate every human emotion to the dollar sign—"

"Cattermole," said Mr. Winsby, "you are permitting yourself liberties. Your courageous attack on my assailant a moment ago is all that prevents me from dispensing with your services because of those offensive remarks."

"I'm sorry, sir," old Cattermole mumbled, and grew very red in the face. "I hear things around the Valley, Mr. Winsby," he added, "and even at the risk of losing my job I want to tell you, sir, you're as popular as a wet collie dog in a French laundry. If an old man may be permitted to offer advice to a boy he's known since the day that boy was weaned, I'd suggest that you let this matter drop right where it is—and go away for a few months' vacation until the popular excitement dies away."

"I accept the advice, Cattermole, and I believe it to be sound. I've been in the harness pretty steadily since Father died, and a little trip to New York might do me good."

"You have never been to New York, I believe," replied Cattermole.

"Never had time after I left the state university," Winsby answered. "Keep your eye on things, Cattermole. I'll keep in touch with you by wire."

THE golf cap arrived presently, so Mr.

Winsby put it on and walked down to the bank, where he drew a check for a thousand dollars, purchased a draft on New York for a thousand more, drove home, packed a suit-case and a bag, called one of his automobiles and drove down to Guadaloupe to catch a train for San Francisco. Five days later he alighted at the Grand Central Station in New York City, entered a taxicab and was driven to a well-known New York hotel which has the reputation of handling the trade from the Far West.

The clerk glanced at the register as the latest arrival stuck the pen back in the potato. "Horace G. Winsby, San Geronimo, Cal.," he soliloquized. "Thought I'd heard of them all, but San Geronimo is a new one on me." He glanced up at Mr. Winsby and in that brief moment noted everything thereunto belonging or in anywise appertaining.

"Any baggage, Mr. Winsby?"

"Just my hand baggage. I like to travel light," Mr. Winsby replied, "and I left home rather hurriedly. I'll have a sunny corner room, with a bath, high up, if you please."

"About ten dollars a day," the clerk

remarked in tones that were a cross between an interrogation and a warning.

Mr. Winsby nodded. He was a selfish man, and when selfish men accumulate a few millions they are not, in this day and generation, given to stinting themselves on any creature comfort.

When the clerk had called a bell hop and dispatched Mr. Winsby to his room, he turned to the chief clerk.

"Notice that fellow—Winsby, from San Geronimo, California? He took a ten-dollar-a-day room, but he hasn't any baggage except a suit-case and a bag."

"You can never tell about these Western chaps. Let him go for a week."

"He doesn't look like a Westerner to me," the clerk answered, and swung the register for the next guest.

The following morning Horace G. Winsby approached the desk. "Any mail for me?" he queried.

There being none, he went out and looked around the city. When he returned to the hotel about four o'clock that afternoon he again asked for mail, which was not forthcoming.

"Confound that fool manager of mine," he said testily, and went to his room. He was slightly annoyed at Mr. Cattermole for not writing him a daily report of the progress of his affairs in San Geronimo. He was further annoyed to discover that a number of letters of introduction he had been given in San Francisco to people in New York who might or might not help to render his visit a pleasant one, had, in some unaccountable manner, disappeared.

Despite the fact that he didn't know a single human being in New York, Mr. Winsby managed to spend his first three days there without being lonely. The only fly in his ointment was the total absence of any reports from Cattermole. On the third day of his stay in New York he wired Cattermole peremptorily:

Report to me by wire immediately.

Not receiving an answer immediately, he wired his stenographer:

What is matter with Cattermole? No letters as yet. Answer.

By night letter he received a reply next day from the stenographer. A boy brought it to his room while he was shaving, and its contents brought an almost boyish grin to Mr. Winsby's handsome features:

Cattermole in hiding until Italian cools off. Latter threatens kill him on sight as accessory with you. Better stay away. Everything going nicely.

"Poor old Cattermole," chuckled Mr. Winsby. "He always follows the lines of least resistance, and that's why he's working for me in his old age."

When he descended for breakfast he paused at the telegraph desk long enough to send Mr. Cattermole instructions to buck up, have the Italian arrested for disturbing the peace, threats to do great bodily harm, etc., and put under bonds to keep the peace.

After breakfast he took a run down to Atlantic City, where he partook of a lobster that wasn't any better than it ought to have been, with the result that he was taken violently ill and had to stay there three days while two doctors in whom he hadn't the slightest bit of confidence relieved him of an excess of ptomaine germs and more money than he felt like paying.

Not having taken any baggage with him, his clothes were a trifle wrinkled and his linen a trifle soiled when he reached his hotel in New York. Also he looked a trifle pale. There being no mail for him, he took his key and went to his room and so, like Mr. Pepys, to bed. And as he lay in bed, hating New York and wishing he was back in San Geronimo, a knock sounded on his door.

Mr. Winsby climbed out of bed and cautiously opened the door an inch or two. A bell-hop stood in the hall, and to Mr. Winsby he presented an envelope on a silver tray. Mr. Winsby opened it and discovered a hotel bill for ninety-eight dollars.

"All right, young man," he said testily. "I'll attend to it when I get down stairs this evening. What does that cashier think I am? A dead beat?"

He rested all day and descended for dinner at six-thirty. As he passed the desk, the chief clerk called to him.



"Mr. Winsby," he said confidentially, "your bill is due."

Mr. Winsby was not used to being dunned. He bridled instantly. "Very well," he said, "I'll pay it and leave. The bill was only presented this morning, and you had the bad taste to send the boy up to my room with it."

"With guests who do not arrive with baggage," the clerk explained respectfully, "it is customary to request payment in advance."

"Yah," snarled Mr. Winsby and reached inside his breast coat pocket for his wallet. It was not there, so he felt in the pocket on the other side. Not finding it there, he felt in his pistol pocket, then in his vest pockets, and then through all of his pockets once more.

"I must have left my pocket-book upstairs," he said. "I'll go get it."

He turned to the elevator. The clerk nodded to a large man whom Mr. Winsby would have recognized for a retired policeman, had the former's up-bringing not been accomplished in the San Geronimo valley. This large man was the house detective, and it was his business to see that Mr. Winsby did not slip out with any hand-baggage; so he followed the delinquent guest upstairs. In his room Mr. Winsby failed to discover anything like a pocket-book, and a horrible suspicion flashed through his mind that he had been robbed coming up from Atlantic City. He went down to the desk and confided this suspicion to the clerk, who appeared unsympathetic.

"My friend," said this world-weary young man, "don't try to pull any of that hick stuff on this house. We get that a hundred times a day in this town, old man. Gentlemen from the West drift in here by the score—"

"I'll wire home for funds to-night," said Mr. Winsby angrily, "and take up that bill in the morning."

"Very well," said the chief clerk, and Mr. Winsby passed into the dining-room. The clerk conferred with the manager and the house detective.

"He's a crook," the latter declared. "Here's a copy of a telegram I found in his room." And he produced the message from Mr. Winsby's stenographer. "He pulled a trick out there in San Ge-

ronimo an' they're after him. His pal's in hidin' an' his moll's tippin' him off to stay away till the smoke lifts."

"He's working the same old stunt," the clerk assured the manager. "Keeps asking for a letter that doesn't come—business of damning his manager, irritation and annoyance. The old busy business man stuff!"

"Works it a little too hard, eh?" the manager queried. The clerk nodded. "He arrived with light hand baggage. McBride was on duty when he registered, and he told Mac he was traveling light because he'd left in a hurry. Said he liked to travel light and buy as he went. He hung around for three or four days and then disappeared. When he came back this morning he looked like food shot from guns. I think he's been off on a bat, and now he says he must have been robbed, and tries to give me the old gag about wiring home for funds."

"What do you think?" the manager queried, addressing the chief clerk and the house detective.

"Beat," they declared in unison.

"Rous mit 'em," the manager replied carelessly. "Send his baggage down to the store-room while he's eating and make him pay cash for his dinner."

**F**ORTUNATELY for Mr. Winsby, he did not eat much. His internal economy was still a trifle sensitive. He had bouillon, some shirred eggs, tea and toast. When the waiter brought him the check and he reached for the latter's pencil to sign it, the man bowed low and whispered:

"Pardon, but Monsieur must pay cash. The head waiter—eet is not my fault." And he favored Mr. Winsby with a Gallic shrug.

"Oh, very well, if they feel that way about it," said the King of San Geronimo, and produced the requisite sum from the small change in his vest pocket. Also he tipped the waiter. Then he strode angrily back to the desk and asked to see the manager. The manager came, and Mr. Winsby demanded to know what he meant by insulting a guest in that manner.

"Confound you, sir," he declared, "I could buy this hotel and every con-



founded flunkey in it. Evidently you do not know who I am." And he laid in the manager's hand a card of the San Geronimo Savings & Loan Society, which bore his name as president.

"Yes, I know," the manager said gently. "We get this same old story every day in the year, and experience has taught us that it doesn't pay to believe it. We have been stuck too often by people who thrust cards like yours under our nose when they cannot pay their first week's bill, and beg off for another week. Cards such as yours are easy enough to accumulate, Mr. Winsby. Although, of course, if you can satisfy us as to your identity and responsibility, we will be very glad to extend you reasonable credit."

"I don't know a soul in the city," Mr. Winsby faltered. "However, I want to assure you I'll be in ample funds by noon to-morrow."

"We hope so. In the meantime we've given your room to another guest, and your baggage is in the store-room. We feel obliged to retain it, Mr. Winsby, until you settle your bill."

Mr. Winsby relieved himself of a few burning sentences, rushed to the telegraph desk and wrote a telegram to Cattermole, instructing him to wire a thousand dollars immediately and without fail. The little lady at the key counted the words carefully and said: "One dollar please."

"Send it collect," said Mr. Winsby. He had taken stock to his assets and knew himself to be the possessor of seventy-five cents. "It's to my manager," he added.

He walked back to the desk. "Since I am unable to pass the night here," he said to the manager with dignity, "perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me where I can procure a good, clean room for—er—fifty cents."

"Certainly, Mr. Winsby. Try the Mills Hotel No. 3, at Thirty-sixth and Seventh Avenue. The rooms are small, but absolutely clean and sanitary."

"Thank you," Mr. Winsby replied. He lighted a cigar and felt in the little belt pocket of his trousers for his watch. Everybody in the San Geronimo was honest, and Mr. Winsby had contracted the habit of wearing his watch in that pocket, with a black silk ribbon, gold buckle and fob dependant from it. The watch was gone! In sudden panic his hand flew to his tie. His turquoise scarf-pin, studded with little diamonds, was gone also. Whoever had "cleaned" him had made a very thorough job of it, and with a sinking heart Mr. Winsby sallied forth into Broadway.

He had scarcely left the hotel before the house detective approached the telegraph desk.

"Did his Rab's pay for that message?" he queried. The girl shook her head and showed him the telegram. He held up a fat hand in protest.

"You can take a chance if you want to," he said, "but the chances are, if you do, you'll find, when you get your pay check at the end of the month, that you've paid for that tel. yourself. This guy is in Dutch with the house, girlie. We've got his baggage in the store-room right now. This man Cattermole is his crooked pal, and the telegram wont be delivered, because Cattermole's under cover waitin' for the popular excitement to die down over a job him an' this guy Winsby pulled back in California. You take a tip from me. If this guy wants you to send a telegram for him, see the money before you send it. He aint got no credit at the desk."

Since she was a poor working girl, the telegraph operator decided not to trust Mr. Winsby for the price of that telegram.

**The second half of this story, in which we learn how the King of San Geronimo managed to exist in New York without money, and the effect this had on his love for Miss O'Grady, will be in the May issue of The Red Book Magazine, on the news-stands April 23rd.**

ILLUSTRATED  
BY RICHARD  
CULTER



# The Seven of Hearts

*A story of one of the extremely rare cases in which a Scotland Yard man used a disguise.*

By Frank Froest

*Who has introduced a new type of detective story*

**A**LLINFORD rubbed the end of a penholder against the bald patch at the back of his head and played a heel-and-toe tattoo with his boot on the floor. For a second time he compared the paragraph in "Printed Informations" with the written document in his hand.

"It's a nightmare," he declared aloud. "I shall wake up presently. You can't tell me that on the same day two people are going to lose two distinct diamond necklaces, each with the same number of stones set in the same way, of exactly the same description and with the same value. It's ridiculous; it's beyond reason." And he reached for the telephone.

For ten minutes he held an animated conversation with the chief of the Criminal Investigation Department. At last he replaced the receiver thoughtfully, folded the documents, and put them in the breast pocket of his morning coat. Two minutes he spent with a velvet pad polishing his silk hat, which he finally adjusted on his head at the fashionable angle, picked up a pair of lavender-colored gloves, and with a glance at himself in the glass, went out into the sunlit morning.

As a divisional detective inspector, in charge of an important district of the West End, he always made it a point to dress well. In the department he was known as "Beau Allinford." His carefully-kept gray mustache, his square shoulders and well-tailored clothes on his tall figure, gave him the appearance of a retired military officer.

His way led him to the Durbar Hotel, and the manager of that huge caravansary greeted him with a handshake of relief. "Come into my private office," he invited. "Have you been able to make anything of it yet? I needn't tell you that the hotel will be grateful if it can be cleared up without any unnecessary publicity—though, of course, we're not strictly responsible, as Mr. Verndale kept the diamonds in his own rooms."

He was a rotund little man. His bright little inquiring eyes were fixed with some anxiety on the detective. A robbery at an hotel is apt to have serious results on its patronage.

"You don't expect me to touch a button and produce the thief and the gems, do you?" inquired Allinford, irritably. "It's not an hour ago since I was here and first heard of the robbery."

"No, no; of course not," said the manager soothingly. "I'm quite sure you'll do your best."

The ruffled Allinford sat down. "Let me tell you my trouble, Mr. Lanton," he said. "Perhaps you can help. Here's Mr. Rex Verndale, a customer of your hotel—"

"Shall we say a client?" interrupted the little manager with dignity.

"Very well, a client if you prefer that. Between six o'clock last evening and nine o'clock this morning Mr. Verndale lost from his room a diamond necklace valued at five thousand pounds sterling. Now,"—he took the "Informations" from his pocket and tapped it with a white forefinger,—*"this morning it was reported to headquarters that a burglary was committed at Sir Rupert Helton's town house in Mount Street and that the thieves got away with Lady Helton's jewel-case which contained, among other things, a diamond necklace worth five thousand pounds sterling."*

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the manager with astonishment. "What an extraordinary coincidence!"

"I believe you," said Allinford grimly. "What's more extraordinary is that the descriptions of the two necklaces tally, even to the weight of each individual diamond. Now I'm going up to see Mr. Verndale again, but I wanted to ask you what you know about him beforehand."

The manager thought he saw a subtle suggestion in the question. He made a gesture deprecatory of suspicion. "He's undoubtedly a gentleman," he said, laying a slight stress on the second word. "He's stayed with us for three months or more in every year for more than five years now. He's traveled a great deal, I believe. He is very well known among some good people and has a private income of his own. He's extremely well-off, I should judge. You don't believe,"—with a recollection of a scheme of which he had heard,—*"that he's trying to work an insurance fraud?"*

"That's one of the points," said Allinford. "The jewels were not insured. First time I've heard of anyone with a valuable heirloom—which he says it was—which was not insured. You don't know where he gets his income? No?

Well, it doesn't matter! I think I'll go up and see him now. I'll look in later on you."

Mr. Rex Verndale occupied a suite of rooms on the first floor of the by-no-means-inexpensive Durbar Hotel, in itself a proof of ample means, if, as the manager said, he had occupied them for long terms over a period of years.

His manner, as he received Allinford, was loftily austere and patronizing. He was a young man of thirty or thereabouts, tow-headed, with a clean-shaven face, alert eyes and an overpowering odor of scent. The detective detested a man who used scent.

He raised his eyebrows languidly as the official explained the coincidence that had arisen. "That's very extraordinary—very extraordinary indeed!" he drawled. "How do you account for it?"

"I can't!" said Allinford bluntly. "Do you know Sir Rupert Helton or Lady Helton?"

"My good man,"—Verndale stretched out a well-fitting boot and rocked to and fro as he admired it,—*"I'm not sure whether I do or not. I may have met them—I can't say. One sees so many people."*

"There's one other point—you'll forgive me for mentioning it. You told me these diamonds had been your mother's. Do you know where she got them?"

Verndale sighed wearily, as one patiently tolerating a bore. "They were given her by my father, on their wedding day," he said. "My father was the second son of the eighth Earl of Malchester. I don't believe he stole them."

Allinford stolidly ignored the sarcasm. "It isn't clear to me, either, why you had them here. Surely they'd have been safer in the bank."

"Perhaps they would," agreed Verndale, still as if talking to a persistent child. "That idea had occurred to me, Mr.—er—Allinford—thank you. In point of fact, they were in Chancery Lane Safe Deposit up to yesterday morning, when I took them out. I am suffering from—ah—a temporary financial stress, at the moment, and it was my intention—you understand?"

"Thank you. I think I do. Now, Mr. Verndale, you said you had a few friends

in to bridge last evening. I should be obliged if you would let me have a list of their names."

Verndale sat up. "But they are people quite above suspicion," he said stiffly. "I can't have them annoyed. I would rather drop the whole thing. Really, Mr.—ah—er—yes, Allinford." He shook his head reprovingly.

"I assure you they shall not be annoyed. It is necessary or I would not ask you."

Verndale moved to an inlaid writing-desk. "Oh, well! In that case—" He scribbled a few minutes and handed the list to Allinford. "And now perhaps you will excuse me," he said.

As Allinford went out, he noticed something on the floor, half hidden under the curtain. He stooped to pick it up; it was a playing card—the seven of hearts.

**T**HERE is always a certain sameness in the steps taken to investigate a crime. Indeed, a great part of the work of the investigator is usually done before the actual commission of crime—done by an organization which compiles every ascertainable fact about a probable criminal, from his finger-prints to the state of his finances, his methods of working, to his latest address.

For the time being, Allinford was too busy to devote much thought to the coincidence of the second robbery. It was his duty to find how Verndale's jewels had disappeared, and to that end it was an obvious step to find out which of the known jewel thieves could have committed the theft and then to eliminate them, one by one, until the right person—if it really was a professional thief—was known.

He had twenty men under his immediate command, and the case afforded work for all. To each man he indicated a line of inquiry and then he caught a 'bus for Scotland Yard. He was wishful to find out exactly what had happened on the parallel inquiry of Lady Helton's necklace.

It was on the narrow stone flight of stairs, leading upwards from the back door of the Metropolitan Police Office—which is the official name for Scotland

Yard—that he met the burly familiar figure of Weir Menzies, one of the chief inspectors of the department.

Menzies grabbed him by the elbow. "That you, Allinford? I've been expecting you this last hour. You're handling the Durbar Hotel jewel case, aren't you? I've got the Lady Helton end. What's the latest?"

"The latest, sir," said Allinford, slowly and deliberately, "is nothing. We've not got fairly started yet. I was hoping you'd be able to help."

"Come inside," said Menzies. He pushed his colleague into the Chief Inspector's room and dragged forward a chair. "I may help or I may mix things up. I've finished my job. That part if it was simple."

"Finished!" repeated Allinford.

"Yes, finished. Tell me—is your man—Verndale—a friend of the Heltons?"

"I asked him. He isn't even sure that he knows 'em."

Menzies looked meaningfully across at the other. "Sure to say that. What I mean is he didn't know the lady before her marriage—old flame, and that sort of thing?"

"I don't know." Allinford glanced at his watch. "I may be able to tell in three or four hours' time. I've got two men collecting all they can about him. How about the Helton Case?"

"It didn't take long to burst that up. I got down to Mount Street early and saw the lady—a fine woman she is, too! You may have seen her picture in the society papers. She was in tears, and Sir Rupert was raving up and down, cursing burglars and police and servants indiscriminately. It seems he had asked her to wear the necklace at the ball he is giving to-night. She got it out of the bank yesterday, according to her story. One of the lower windows had been left open, and it was through that that the burglar entered. Her bedroom is on the first floor and adjoined by a dressing-room. She had left her jewel-case on the dressing-table. She woke up early this morning, heard a noise in the dressing-room and raised an alarm. The thief got clear away—with the jewel case. The household theory was that he'd gone through the open window.



Verndale raised his eyebrows languidly. "That's very extraordinary—very extraordinary indeed!" he drawled. "How do you account for it?" "I can't!" said Allinford bluntly.

"Sir Rupert fixed the time of the robbery. He had looked at his watch; it was ten past five. I, of course, went and had a talk with the constable on the beat. Now here was a curious thing. He had placed a private mark on that window when he went on duty. He had gone by the house at five o'clock and it was undisturbed. About thirty yards along, he met his section sergeant, and they were there talking when the alarm was raised."

"Fake?" asked Allinford.

"Fake, all right! I didn't beat about the bush. I put it to Sir Rupert and Lady Helton. She denied it, of course; he took her side, and you can take my word for it he didn't gloss over any defects he could find in my character. I was ordered out of the house,—he told me to go before I was kicked out,—and he's going to get me hounded out of the Service." Menzies grinned as though the prospect did not greatly daunt him.

"Then it comes to this," said Allinford thoughtfully: "the necklace that has been stolen from Verndale was originally Lady Helton's and it must have passed out of her hands to him, directly or indirectly."

"That's how I make it!"

"She faked the robbery because she didn't want to tell her husband what she had done with the jewels. You're thinking of blackmail, Mr. Menzies, of course?"

Menzies nodded. "That's the drift. How do we know he hasn't been bleeding her? I'd look into it from that point of view, if I were you—though, after all, it doesn't much matter how he came by the necklace if you can't prove anything. If it's blackmail, Lady Helton, who's the only possible witness, won't speak. No, take it all around, Allinford, I'd stick to safe lines. All that ought to worry you is who stole the jewels from Verndale."

"H'm—yes! About your own affair, sir—the necklace was insured?"

"Yes, I was talking to Lloyd's assessors just before you came in. No claim has been put in yet. If it is,"—his jaw became grim,—"there'll be trouble for Lady Helton. But it's not likely. She won't be such a fool." Wherein Menzies, for once, showed himself no prophet, for by four o'clock that afternoon a representative of Lloyd's had informed him that a formal claim for the loss of the necklace had been put in.

MENZIES had insisted that the coincidence of the two necklaces was a side issue, with which Allinford need not concern himself. But now the face of things had changed. If the robbery from Mount Street had been faked—and of this the detectives had no doubt—the claim on the insurance companies was an attempt to obtain money by fraud. It might be possible to prove this on the facts known to Menzies. But to clinch the matter beyond doubt, it became necessary to show that Verndale's stolen necklace was actually identical with that that had belonged to Lady Helton.

Allinford heard of the claim by telephone. He sat back, took out the seven of hearts which he had picked up in Verndale's rooms, and examined it minutely. He could not rid his mind of the thought that the card held the key to the mystery. It was pure intuition—and intuition is often more likely to mislead than to guide in most investigations. Presently he shrugged his shoulders and pressed the bell. A broad-shouldered young man, whose face and bearing were those of a city clerk of athletic possibilities, answered.

"Ah, Swain!" said the Inspector. "I've got a little job for you. You had Verndale under observation till four o'clock, hadn't you? Ah, good! Tell me where he was when you were relieved."

"He was at 704 Granville Street, Piccadilly. Been there since twelve o'clock. Must have lunched there."

Allinford smashed his open hand down on his thigh, and his eyes narrowed. "That's it!" he exclaimed. "I'll be dashed if that isn't it." But he volunteered no explanation. "Look here,

Swain," he went on, "I want you to go to the Durbar Hotel and see if you can get hold of a pack of cards out of Mr. Verndale's room. I'm relying on you not to do anything foolish. You needn't go to the manager—understand? I want this done quietly. Bring 'em to me as soon as you can."

The young man gave a business-like assent and disappeared. In half an hour he was back. He laid a pack of cards on the desk, and the Inspector picked them up with a word of thanks. He asked no questions.

For half an hour Allinford went through the cards with a steady scrutiny; then he carried them nearer to the window and examined them in pairs and threes, by what photographer's call 'transmitted light.' A little chuckle broke from his lips:

"What a Dutchman I was not to think of it before. This begins to explain things."

The door pushed open and Menzies entered. The usually smooth forehead of the Chief was corrugated into a frown. "What's the game?" he asked. "Are you taking up conjuring tricks?"

"Something of that sort, sir," smiled Allinford. He replaced the cards in their case and put the case in his pocket. "If all goes as I think it will, we'll know where we are by to-night."

"That's all right! You got my telephone message?"

"About Lady Helton—yes. The woman must be mad!"

"It's not the woman so much; I imagine she would be pleased enough to let the whole thing drop. It's Sir Rupert. You see, technically, the necklace is his—it's insured in his name and he's put in a claim. He's one of that honest, mutton-headed, obstinate, fiery kind of men, and he's not going to be dictated to by any blessed common policeman—that's me!—from Scotland Yard. I thought I'd call in, as this was on my way back, and let you know how things are."

"What are you going to do?"

Menzies spread his hands out hopelessly. "What can I do? Sir Rupert's honest enough. He believes in his wife. Of course I might charge them both with



an attempt to defraud, but it could never be brought home against him—and as it would have to be brought against both of them together, the charge against her would naturally fail, too. If it had been her own necklace and she had put in the claim in her own name, it would have been different. The insurance company will have to fight, I expect; it's none of our funeral." He yawned and stood up. "Well, I thought you'd like to know how things are. I'm going on to the Yard and then home. Good-night!"

Allinford sighed as he reflected that his own connection with the case gave no promise of immediate leisure. He had formulated an idea, but if that fell through it might be days or weeks before he would be able to settle things. He called Swain again, and gave that intelligent young man long and earnest instructions. Then he went out to a frugal meal of weak tea and dry toast. He was troubled with his digestion at times. He ate abstractedly. At last, with the air of an idle man who is not quite sure what to do with himself, he sauntered out and strolled towards Shaftesbury Avenue.

There is a famous theatrical outfitter in one of the side streets of that thoroughfare. And the urbane, frock-coated proprietor came forward, rubbing his hands.

"Good evening, Mr. Allinford. Been a beautiful day, hasn't it? You're looking very fit."

"Yes, it's grand weather," admitted the detective, and with that concession to conversation he got to business. "Say, can you turn me out as a doctor in half an hour? That's all the time I can give you. I want something weather-proof and fool-proof—something that isn't obvious. I want have a false beard. You know the kind of thing I mean."

The costumer measured him with a professional glance. "I know," he said. "I can make you so that your own mother won't know you."

The art of disguise—especially facial disguise—is one that is very rarely used by officers attached to the Criminal Investigation Department. There is indeed a make-up room at Scotland Yard where men may transform themselves into anything from coal-heavers to guardsmen,

but it is used only when the ordinary attire and manner of the detective would be so entirely out of keeping with his surroundings as to attract attention. A dirty muffler, unshaven face and corduroys work a transformation more difficult of detection than the most cunning use of grease-paint and wigs.

It is only when an officer is to be brought into personal contact with someone who knows him and by whom it is essential he should not be recognized, that he goes to the extreme and very risky length of altering his face.

Allinford was critical and exacting while expert hands transformed him. When the disguise was complete, he examined himself with the mirror and gave a grunt of approval. His gray, drooping mustache had become well-waxed and auburn, with pointed ends. His scanty hair also had a tinge of the same color and had been brushed so that it appeared twice as luxuriant as it was in reality. A razor and dye had worked wonders with his eyebrows. He wore his own clothes and was as neat as ever, but it would have needed keen eyes to detect any likeness to the man who had entered the establishment.

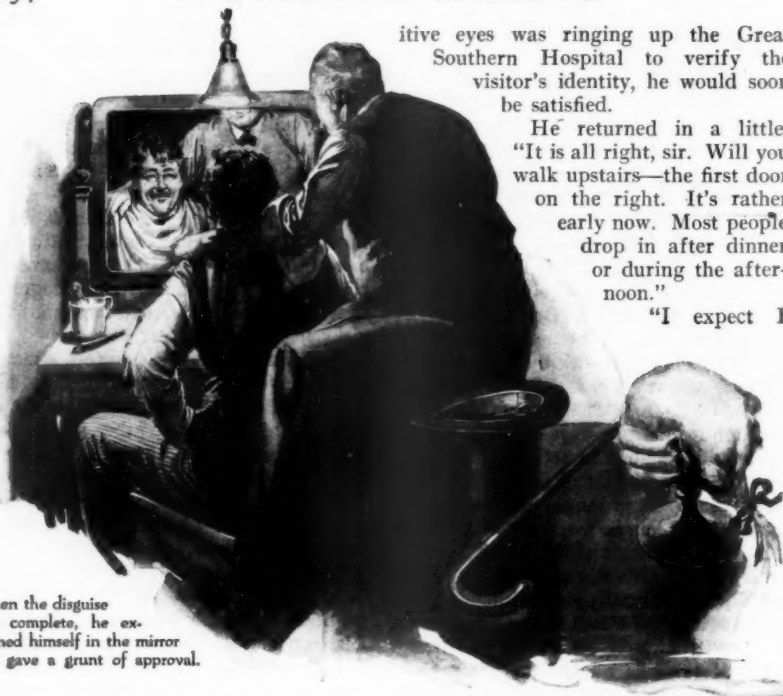
"Yes; I think that ought to do," he commented.

UNLESS a person were keenly observant or suspicious, he would be very unlikely to guess that the front door of 704 Granville Street, Piccadilly, had not been out of sight of officers of police for six or seven days.

It was a quiet house, solid-looking and respectable—a residence which would not have shamed a Cabinet minister. A luxurious motor-brougham had just driven away when Allinford walked briskly up the broad stone steps and pressed the bell. The door swung smoothly back, and a ponderous footman, in olive green livery, confronted him.

The detective fingered a card. "Will you take this to Mr. Glenston, please. Mr. Roberts, a friend of mine, suggested I might call."

Now Roberts is a fairly common name. That is why Allinford had used it. He knew that the house had many visitors and it was possible that a



When the disguise was complete, he examined himself in the mirror and gave a grunt of approval.

Roberts might be among them or, alternately, that the occupant might not feel certain that he had not a client named Roberts. On the card the footman read:

AUDREY LATIMER, M.D.  
Great Southern Hospital

His eyes wandered from the card to its owner, in a measured scrutiny that might have seemed offensive had not Allinford been prepared for it. He met the look with bland arrogance.

"Very good, sir," said the man. "Will you come this way?"

He ushered the detective into a reception room furnished in keeping with the solid character of the house, and left him. For ten minutes Allinford waited, drumming his fingers on his knee. He knew very well what was happening, but he had taken precautions. When he had assumed the name and title of a hospital doctor, he had arranged that the hospital authorities should not betray him. If the muscular footman with the inquis-

itive eyes was ringing up the Great Southern Hospital to verify the visitor's identity, he would soon be satisfied.

He returned in a little. "It is all right, sir. Will you walk upstairs—the first door on the right. It's rather early now. Most people drop in after dinner or during the afternoon."

"I expect I

shall find something to amuse me," said Allinford, and while the man held open the door, he passed out and up the thickly-carpeted stairway.

There were a dozen or more people in the room which the servant had indicated. It was a big apartment, and its furniture and fittings were rather those of a club than of a private house. Prominent at one end was a kind of bar partly shielded by curtains, and with two or three small tables in front of it. Some of them were occupied. One woman—she was scarcely more than a girl—with delicate tinted complexion, was drinking tea with an elder companion of her own sex, a soft-faced woman with a heavy jaw.

A little group of men were clustered around another table, laughing and chatting, but their drink was not tea. In the body of the room was a large roulette table at which the croupier sat idle, in his high-backed chair. Nearer the window, half a dozen men and women were seated round a *chemin-de-fer* table, watching the dealer.

Decidedly it was a slack time of day. There was none of that hectic excitement which the picturesque writer about West End gambling dens loves to depict. It was all very decorous. As Allinford moved up to the baccarat, one man signaled to the waiter and scribbled a check. The detective noted the amount with an inward gasp. It was for five hundred pounds.

He observed Verndale among the group at the bar, and moved towards them. Refreshments—even to the most costly of wines—were free. But he contented himself with a modest cup of tea. He wanted to keep his head clear.

"Yes," Verndale was saying, in his arrogant, dogmatic way, "baccarat's all very well to a point, but I'd nearly as soon play pitch-and-toss. It's a children's game. Give me poker—or auction bridge, for that matter—something with more life in it."

One of the group—a tall young man with a weak chin and a scrubby toothbrush mustache—grinned feebly. "There's life in your poker, Verndale."

"You ought to know," chuckled a second man. "For my part, I'd sooner back against him at poker than auction. There's a little woman who's paid for her bridge lessons—eh, Verndale?"

Verndale frowned. The last hint seemed to have touched a sore point. "That's enough, Devine!" he said curtly. Then, more amiably, "You can't afford to be chivalrous in a card-game, you know; there's a difference between sportsmanship and quixotry. Most women are fools. If they had the sense to stick to a pure gamble,—something where no skill is required,—they would sometimes win. Talking about poker, I'm willing to sit in. But we can't play here. Suppose you people come up to my rooms. How many of us are there—four? Five would make a better game."

His gaze rested on Allinford only for a moment. The detective was quick to see the invitation. "I should be happy to sit in, if you will allow me," he said. "My name is Latimer." He proffered a card.

Verndale bowed. "Pleased to know you, Dr. Latimer. My name is Verndale. Let me introduce Lord Tiverley, Sir

Richard Hopville, Mr. Granger. Well, we might as well have some taxis."

"He thinks he's roped a new mug," meditated Allinford.

Verndale indeed seemed to have taken a fancy to the stranger. He insisted on the doctor's sharing his cab, while the other three took a second vehicle. By the time they reached the Durbar Hotel, the two might have been, judging by their manner, the friends of a lifetime.

THE game began slowly enough, but Allinford had fears that the ten pounds with which he had provided himself would not go far. He played cautiously. Hopville, the weak-chinned young man, was the plunger of the party. His futile attempts at bluff, at times, awoke the derision of the others. Verndale seemed to be feeling his feet. The detective judged him to be measuring the game of the others. He was winning a trifle.

He was a lavish host, too, for a servant was continually filling up glasses at a side-table; but it was noticeable that he himself drank little.

Allinford had lost five pounds, and he was still no further advanced than when they had begun. He bit his lip. All his plans depended upon his proving Verndale to be a cheat, and yet, to all appearances, the man was playing honestly enough. The worst of it was that he might go on playing honestly. The skilled cheat most often only falls upon unfair methods in a game like poker when luck runs against him. While it holds, he is content with his expert knowledge of the straight game.

As the game warmed up, Hopville's luck turned. He took risks; he broke every law of the safe game. Yet he won. He seemed able to do nothing wrong. The stack of chips in front of him mounted higher and higher, and he grinned inanely over his cards. Verndale, too, was losing. Allinford's small capital ebbed away until only a sovereign was left. He sat tense and watchful.

"Now, Doctor," said Verndale, smiling as he picked up the cards, "I am going to give you a real royal flush. Just keep your eye on me." He dealt slowly.

As the last card fell from his fingers, Allinford suddenly rose, reached across the table and wrenched away the pack. "One moment, gentlemen!" he cried. "Hold your hands!"

Verndale's chair overturned with a crash, as he leaped to his feet. "What the devil do you mean?" he demanded. His white hands were opening and shutting, and his face was flushed. "Are you making any suggestion against anyone present?"

"I am!" said the detective sharply. "Sit down!"

"You're a liar!" stormed Verndale. "Get out of my rooms or I'll have you thrown out."

"I think not," said Allinford quietly. "I should advise you to sit still till I have finished. Gentlemen, the cards are marked! You, Mr. Granger, hold a pair of aces, a pair of fours, and the king of diamonds. You, Lord Tiverley, have four clubs, one knave, four, three and the deuce of spades. Sir Richard Hopville has three queens. Mr. Verndale, I observe, has dropped his hand on the floor and as I am not quite expert enough to have read them, except slowly, I can't tell you what they were. My own are a pair of knaves, the three of diamonds, six of spades and the seven of hearts."

"We've got a blessed conjuror!" laughed Sir Richard Hopville.

No one paid him any attention. Granger and Tiverley turned their cards face upwards and looked gravely from Allinford to Verndale. The latter was breathing heavily. He tried to laugh.

"You know me, Granger," he said; "so do you, Tiverley, and you, Hopville. I don't quite know what this man's idea is, but it looks like blackmail. If the cards are marked, he has managed to introduce them himself. Why,"—he brought his fist down on the table to emphasize his remark,—"*I've lost money myself.*"

"That's true!" said Hopville. "A pot!"

"Before we go any further," said Allinford, "I may explain that I am a police officer. That will dispose of any question of blackmail. Perhaps you will hold a card to the light, Lord

Tiverley. Thank you. You will notice a small spot near the top left-hand corner. Now put the card down. That spot has gone. It looks like an optical illusion, doesn't it? You could be told the cards were marked and search for a week if you didn't know what to look for. You will find that spot in a different position on each card, according to the suit and value. The person who marked them had a full acquaintance with the virtues of aniline dye. An expert could read them as they were dealt, as easily as though they were face upwards. He could do more than that, with a little experience. He could deal any hand he wished to any person at the table." Tiverley towered over Verndale.

"I think I've heard enough," he said. "I ought to have been less simple. I am obliged to you, Mr.—er—er—?"

"Allinford," said the detective.

"Thank you, Mr. Allinford. I assume—ah—" He paused, embarrassed. "I assume you are not acting in your professional capacity. That is, I shall not be required to give evidence."

"I hope not, my lord. Indeed I may say I think it unlikely."

Verndale pushed out a detaining hand. "You don't really believe this preposterous thing? It's so utterly ridiculous."

Lord Tiverley brushed by him, with head erect, and Granger followed. Hopville sprawled, with his arms over the card-table. "'Pon my soul!" he ejaculated. "It's like a scene out of a melodrama. A stage detective and all!"

"Including the wicked baronet," retorted Allinford quickly. "You may drop your pose, if you please, Sir Richard. This is serious and you will be wise to recognize it. Do you think your change of luck was not noticeable directly a new pack of cards was introduced?"

Hopville sat upright. "So he's in it, too, is he?" sneered Verndale. "Look here, Mr. Detective, we've had quite enough. I don't suppose you're a rich man, but it will take every penny you've got when I commence an action for slander. You've wormed your way in here in disguise, and you've accused me of card-sharpping. Now go—if you've finished!"

Allinford moved to the door, turned the key and thrust it in his pocket. "I haven't quite," he said coolly. "Now listen to me." He pulled out his watch. "It's now ten minutes to nine. At nine o'clock a police raid will be made on 704 Granville Street, and certain people will be charged with assisting to run a gambling-house. Now there's nothing on earth that can prevent you two being charged as proprietors. Don't trouble to deny it. There will be plenty of evidence. The place has been watched for days. I don't suppose a fine of a few hundreds—which is what it will probably amount to—will affect you much, but if you're wise you'll come off your pedestals and listen to plain sense. There's another charge it may be in my power to prefer—receiving stolen goods."

"Go on!" laughed Verndale. "Accuse us of murder while you're at it."

"Oh, very well," said Allinford nonchalantly, "only you may as well know that the jewels you had from Lady Helton were not her property. They were stolen from her husband, and a bogus robbery arranged to account for their absence."

To casual observers, Verndale's appearance remained unchanged, but a slight distension of the nostrils showed Allinford that his shot had told. "I do not admit that I had the necklace from Lady Helton," he said."

"Come," said Allinford bluntly, "you're not such a fool as you'd wish me to think. Would you expect a jury to believe that? Lady Helton has been at Granville Street day after day, for weeks on end. She had an ample allowance for all ordinary purposes. She made over the jewels to you either as a payment or as security for a gambling debt. If she didn't, it's worse for you, for you had stolen goods in your possession for which you can't account. You must remember you have signed an exact description of the jewels."

Hopville whistled a tune. Verndale laid his head on his hands and stared thoughtfully into vacancy. "You've got me in a corner," he admitted. "What is it you want me to do?"

"I want you to return the necklace," said Allinford. "No,"—as Verndale would have spoken,—“don't trouble to put up another bluff. It's easy enough to see what's happened. Lady Helton wanted the jewels returned, so that she might wear them to-night. You refused and, fearful that she would become a nuisance in the future, arranged that they should be apparently stolen. Unluckily for you, she had the same idea of a bogus robbery. Now—"

"If I give it up, will you promise me nothing further shall be done?"

"I can't promise. The gambling-house prosecution will go forward in any case. If the necklace is returned, however, I doubt if Sir Richard Helton will prosecute."

Verndale rose, crossed the room and, unlocking the secretary, took out a red morocco case which he placed in the hands of the detective.

"YES, sir,"—Allinford was speaking to Menzies,—“luck and bluff carried it through. When I heard that the Helton robbery was bogus, I began to get a glimmering, because I had picked up a marked card in Verndale's rooms. Then, when I heard he had gone to Granville Street, I began to be more sure, more especially as Lady Helton had been seen there. The games in the gambling-house were straight enough—it wouldn't have paid to run anything crooked—but Hopville and Verndale used to pick up likely young fools there and carry them off to Verndale's rooms."

"I'll own Hopville had me guessing, at first. He looked a regular pigeon—instead of which he was a rook. Of course, it wouldn't have done for Verndale to have won heavily at his own place. But no one was likely to suppose him in with Hopville. As soon as I was sure, I shook them up with my exposure. After that, I bluffed for all I was worth, and they fell into it."

"I see by the papers," said Menzies inconsequently, "that Sir Rupert and Lady Helton are going abroad for a protracted period."

"Exactly!" smiled Allinford.

Another of Mr. Froest's detective stories in the *May Red Book*, on sale at all news-stands April 23rd.



## A Complete Résumé of the Opening

### Chapters of "THE ISLAND OF SURPRISE"

**C**YRUS TOWNSEND BRADY gives, in "The Island of Surprise," a fascinating novel of love, adventure and dramatic surprises.

Robert Lovell is the son of Godfrey Lovell, a Wall Street capitalist. After graduation from college he has spent several years in traveling. His father thinks it time for him to settle down. The young man chooses the writing of novels for his life work, rather than a part in any of his parent's various enterprises. Godfrey Lovell, at first rather skeptical, finally enters into the scheme, and even consents to lend Robert his most confidential secretary, Dorothy Arden, to "take" his first novel as it is dictated.

Miss Arden is beautiful in a rather cold, austere way. She is the daughter of a man who went bankrupt in a contest with Godfrey Lovell in "the Street." Recognizing that Lovell fought fair, she respected him, and after gaining employment in his offices, worked with such ability that she gained his confidence.

Secretly she has always been interested in Robert Lovell, but outwardly she has maintained reserve toward him. At the beginning of the dictation of the novel she continues this pose, but as the story progresses it becomes apparent that young Lovell is modeling his heroine from her, and his hero from himself. Unconsciously he is making love to her through the pages of the book.

**O**N the day the last of the story is dictated, Miss Arden, swept from her reserve, shows she is in love with the young writer. He believes there is an answering love in his heart. Miss Arden slips on a rug and is stunned by the fall. When she recovers, she is in Lovell's arms, and he is pouring words of love into her ears.

When Miss Arden reveals to young Lovell that his father had planned to marry him to Dorothy Cassilis, daughter of the Chicago financier who is his ally, Robert, in a burst of resentment, decides that he and Miss Arden shall be married at once. They hurry to the Little Church Around the Corner, and the ceremony is performed.

They return to the office to find that

Godfrey Lovell has suffered a stroke which will necessitate his giving up all business. At his physician's orders, he will take a cruise to the South Seas in his yacht.

**R**OBERT LOVELL finds he must go to Chicago to complete a deal which Godfrey Lovell and Daniel Cassilis are putting through. He goes reluctantly, but acquits himself with credit. Miss Cassilis is not in Chicago, having gone to Albany to visit friends, so he does not meet her.

Robert's father joins him in Chicago, en route to San Francisco, to board the yacht, and insists on the son's accompanying him on the cruise. Robert makes a hurried trip to New York to see his wife, but finds she is gone from her apartment. The only clue to her whereabouts is the fragments of a telegram, which, when pieced together, make only the words: "Can't do without....need you....take first train....meet me."

Young Lovell is stunned. He decides to engage detectives in Chicago, and on his return from the cruise, to find the man who sent that telegram and settle with him.

**A**LTHOUGH he smarts under the supposed deception of his wife, Robert is not so concerned with her that it hinders him from warmly admiring another young woman on his train. A wreck precipitates her into his arms, and he finds her to be Dorothy Cassilis, returning to Chicago to say good-bye to her parents before their departure for the Lovell yacht. Lovell changes her mind about going on the cruise, which she had refused to join in order to avoid him, and so they make the trip west in each other's society, enjoying that trip to the utmost.

Reaching San Francisco, they find Dorothy Arden aboard the yacht, as it was Godfrey Lovell's telegram that her young husband had found in her room. Her letters to Robert had been delayed, and now she knows of his loverlike attentions to Dorothy Cassilis. She meets him with scorn; and the yacht gets under way for the long cruise with Robert Lovell in a most peculiar position to two beautiful young women.





# The Island of Surprise

By Cyrus Townsend Brady

ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER TITTLE

## CHAPTER XI

### *Miss Arden in an Inquiring Mood*

**I**T has been said that there was never a melodrama on the stage, the climax and consequences of which could not be avoided by an explanation which could be written on a post card. The spectator always sees these possibilities, the players never.

The play is like life, in that a half hour of frank conversation would have put things right between Lovell and his wife. That opportunity was difficult to make, and when it did present itself it was not properly improved. Instead of growing better, the situation grew worse. The marriage—as yet a marriage in name only—apparently was not a tie that bound very tightly. It was not yet an obligation that either recognized definitely. A strong lashing may hold a strong man or a strong woman, and both may bear it; a miserably tangled web, while it hampers and binds to a certain degree, really only irritates.

Although Godfrey Lovell had presented Miss Arden not only as his secre-

tary but also as his guest, the position she occupied on the ship was somewhat anomalous, and, like all indefinite things, difficult. Miss Cassilis was polite to her, exceptionally so; but there was no more warmth in her manner than if she had been made of ice, and Miss Arden retorted in kind. Indeed, that had been her habitual manner toward the world prior to her marriage. She was only being paid back in her own coin, but that did not make the payment agreeable to her.

Miss Cassilis thought Miss Arden entirely too good looking and too potentially attractive for a stenographer and secretary to the Lovells. Miss Cassilis had fallen wildly in love with Robert Lovell, and with a woman's intuition she divined something between him and Miss Arden, in whom she saw a powerful and to-be-dreaded rival. A reason for Miss Arden's dislike for Miss Cassilis did not have to be sought. A wife and yet not a wife, jealous and deliberately provoking jealousy, she resented every moment that Robert Lovell spent in Miss Cassilis' society.

Furthermore, although she was not only Godfrey Lovell's secretary, but also

his guest, as he had said, Miss Arden felt her position to be one of social subordination. Godfrey Lovell had brought her along to work. He was engaged in desultory reminiscing, giving her a daily dictation, drawing upon his vast fund of experience, grave and gay, his wide acquaintance with men and measures, which he illuminated by shrewd comment, apposite anecdote and a racy humor that was incisive and delightful to everybody but those upon whom he commented.

He dictated these things very slowly, and a large part of her day was spent in taking them down and transcribing them; a larger part, perhaps, than was fair, for Mr. Lovell was so entranced by his efforts, like many another beginning author, that he kept her at it for unusual periods of time. Robert Lovell resented this. When he found himself denied speech with his wife at all times he became indignant. Man-like, his indignation was unjustly devoted to her.

Everything that pushed him away from one woman thrust him into the arms of another. There was not a dishonorable drop in the man's blood, but what was a mere man to do, between two such women as these, each remarkable in her own way; one persistently misunderstanding him and the other understanding him a little too well for his peace of mind? After all, that marriage had been only a form. So he drifted along, miserable enough at times, wishing at one moment that neither was on the boat and again that one or the other had stayed away, and conducting himself just as any man would under such circumstances.

What inclined him to be less persistent in pursuit of his wife and more susceptible to the wiles, innocent enough, and charming, if rather too obvious, of the other woman, was the fact that Dorothy Arden spent so much of her spare time with Dr. Elverson. He was really a fine chap and well worthy of any woman's companionship. The circumstances of their meeting on the train had been explained, and Lovell had explained to his wife his failure to communicate with her, but neither explanation was quite satisfactory.

If Dorothy Arden were jealous of Dorothy Cassilis, Robert Lovell was also jealous of Dorothy Arden—and incidentally the Doctor was jealous of Robert Lovell. The young physician made a confidant of the first officer, to whom he said frequently that he could not see why Lovell could not content himself with the woman who was obviously designed for him and leave him free to pay his attentions to Miss Arden.

When Lovell got jealous enough, which he did on an average of once a day, he naturally devoted himself more and more to Miss Cassilis, which certainly made his wife more jealous than ever and which certainly punished her sufficiently. This was a dangerous experiment, for it involved Lovell more and more deeply all the time.

The only people on the yacht who were perfectly happy were the four elder ones. They were friends of long standing, business rivals, generally, but big enough not to be rivals socially. They saw, or thought they saw, their plans for the union of the two families progressing famously. The weather was fine; the yacht, perfectly appointed and comfortable, carried them safely and swiftly from one beautiful and interesting harbor or sea to another—almost, it seemed, world without end. Mr. Lovell was regaining his health and all went as merrily as the proverbial marriage bells, the jingling of which some could hear in fancy, while for others they only jangled!

AFTER some weeks of sailing to the southwestward, having long since crossed the line, the yacht dropped anchor one evening off a nameless island, the most northerly of a little known and infrequently visited group between the Celebes and New Guinea. To the south could be seen other islands, rising dimly on the far horizon. The one directly under their lee was described as uninhabited. Several years before, Robert Lovell had landed upon it in his first cruise to the South Seas. There were some exceedingly beautiful natural features and some ruins of prehistoric days. He suggested going out of their course to pay a visit to it.



When Lovell got jealous enough, which he did on an average of once a day, he devoted himself more and more to Miss Cassilis.

Some of the islands to the southward were inhabited by war-like native tribes, ostensibly Mohammedan in religion but Mohammedans of a debased and degraded sort. Arabs or Hindu converts had voyaged thither almost a thousand years before, and traces of the religion they had brought, which had supplanted the wild idolatries of the aborigines, still survived. This island, lying to the north of the group, was swept by tremendous storms, and for some reason had never been inhabited.

The yacht dropped anchor beside the encircling coral reef. By sounding with the lead they found good holding ground some distance from the breakers and outlying rocks and islets which extended beyond the main reef. Although the sea was calm, huge rollers coming down a thousand miles from the line fell with a tremendous crash over the barrier reef.

The island itself, as they surveyed it in the twilight, was exceedingly beautiful. A sort of rocky wall rose some distance inland from the sandy beach bordering the lagoon, which developed farther away into a lofty hill, one side of which ran down into a broad plateau more or less bare of vegetation, which abounded elsewhere in greater profusion. The face of the wall was masked for long stretches by palm trees, vines, and jungle-like undergrowth at its base. At one place a brook fell over the edge, its broad white expanse glistening in the light of the declining sun. Here and there darker spots indicated clefts in the wall, entrances to ravines. There was an opening in the reef which would make access to the land by a small boat easy and safe.

The young people—that is, Robert Lovell and Miss Cassilis—were for an immediate run ashore, but as darkness was about upon them it was decided to postpone the excursion until next day. Captain Gosset decided to send a few casks ashore to fill up some of his empty water tanks from the beautiful stream that flowed so invitingly down the wall. They would have all day for their explorations and it would be a pleasant break in their journey to New Guinea and Java, where they had planned to spend some time.

Most of the people of the yacht turned in early. Godfrey Lovell had been overdoing things lately and was not feeling quite so well as usual. Elverson, who was a capable physician, felt a little alarmed. What a feather it would be in his cap if he could return with Mr. Lovell in restored health! He did not intend to take any chances with such an opportunity. He decided that if Mr. Lovell were no better in the morning he would remain on the ship with him. Mrs. Cassilis and Mrs. Lovell had no fancy for exploring a tropic island. They could see all they wanted of it from comfortable chairs on the deck. It was decided by these two ladies that Miss Arden, whom they had grown to look upon as a thoroughly conventional, entirely dependable machine, should accompany Robert Lovell and Miss Cassilis as a chaperon. It was a pity the Doctor could not go with them, but on the whole these wise ladies reflected that it was better, because Miss Arden could devote her whole time to the duties of chaperonage.

It is not to be imagined that Miss Arden welcomed this task with any degree of joy. As a matter of fact, she hated, she loathed it, she raged against it inwardly. Yet she accepted it without a word, and for two reasons: in the first place, she had to; in the second place, she could not bear the idea that her husband and Miss Cassilis should spend a day alone wandering about an island, which looked so inviting. Although she was fiercely angry at being sent as chaperon, she would have died had she been unable to go, and she had wit enough to perceive that on no other terms could she accompany the two whom she so earnestly wanted to keep under observation. She was glad, too, that the Doctor announced his intention of remaining with Mr. Lovell. She really did not care a snap of her finger for him, and she realized that if he were to go along there would be a separation and she would have fallen to the lot of Elverson.

She had gone to her cabin after this arrangement had been decided upon, but she did not feel sleepy. She tried to read, she tried to think of pleasant

things. After complete failure to do either, she drew a cloak about her shoulders and went on deck.

Save for an anchor watch forward and an officer on the bridge, the deck seemed to be deserted. She had come up the companionway softly and had attracted no attention. She stepped over the hatch-combings and paused a moment, looking about her.

It was a heavenly night. There was no moon but she had never seen the stars so exquisitely brilliant and clear. There was a gentle pitch on the anchored ship, and in her ears was the sound of the slow crashing of the waves on the reef.

ROBERT LOVELL, feeling particularly bitter at his wife's treatment of him, had gone up on deck with Dorothy Cassilis at the lady's suggestion for a little chat before turning in. In his turn he had urged her not to retire so early, when she would have gone below, but to enhance the joy and pleasure of the lovely night by sharing it with him a little longer. Miss Cassilis, nothing loath, had acceded to his request. Engrossed in conversation, the two had not heard the approach of Dorothy Arden.

Robert Lovell had never so far forgot himself as to propose to Dorothy Cassilis, but save for the actual words there was little which had been left unsaid. So attentive had he been that Dorothy Cassilis, finished coquette that she was, had finally lost her head as well as her heart and had so let herself go that he would have been a blind fool indeed not to have seen that night that she loved him. He did not love her. He loved his wife but did not know it, or did not recognize it, or forgot it in his resentment and in the presence of this delectable young woman who exercised upon him in earnest all of the fascinations she had been accustomed to employ with other men in play.

"I thought," said the girl softly, "that I would be sure to hate you. When things are arranged for us," she went on, the night and the darkness giving her courage, "we generally rebel against them. At least I did, so that when they told me you were coming I fled."

"It is the old habit of women, ever since their expulsion from the Garden of Eden."

"I suppose so. And even when I saw you," the girl went on, "I was still determined."

"That telegram I sent was a masterpiece, wasn't it?"

"It was the most audacious thing I ever heard of anyone doing," she returned.

"Why didn't you disavow it then?"

"Because I—because—"

She stopped and turned her head away.

Her hand lay on the rail near him. He even lifted it up and clasped it.

"And now?" he urged.

The girl turned to him with a movement of exquisite abandonment.

"Robert," she said simply, "don't you know?"

Yes, then he knew. It flashed into his mind how entirely he was committed, but he was unable to think how he should act or what he should say. Fortunately or unfortunately, came a sharp interruption. It was Dorothy Arden's voice that caused him to drop Dorothy Cassilis' hand and step back. It came to them clear and cold, with the coldness that arises from fury.

"I see," she began, coming closer to them and comprehending them both in a furious gaze, "that my position to-morrow will not be a sinecure."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Lovell angrily, yet secretly glad of the interruption, and as he spoke four couplets, midnight, rang out from the ship's bell forward.

"You need a chaperon, evidently."

"I can dispense with your attendance to-morrow, Miss Arden," said Dorothy Cassilis, boiling with indignation, "and I can dispense with it now."

"I suppose chaperons always are unwelcome if they prevent—" went on the other woman, and then turning, she paused just long enough to give the word proper, or improper emphasis—"improprieties."

Dorothy Cassilis brought her foot down sharply on the deck.

"How dare you?" she said.

"Miss Arden," said Lovell, "you forget yourself."

"No," said the girl with a meaning look at him which made him wince inwardly, "it is not I who forget."

"But since you have made the charge," broke in Dorothy Cassilis, "let me point out to you that what would be termed improper between you"—and no three letters that were ever assembled could express the contempt she infused in that monosyllable—"and Dr. Elverson, or Mr. Mattern, or any other of the employees of the ship, may be quite right between persons who sustain the relationship which exists between Mr. Lovell and myself."

"What relationship?" cried Dorothy Arden, and it was well that the mask of the night was on her cheek, and they could not see its sudden pallor.

"I will not be catechized further by any of the Lovell employees," said Dorothy Cassilis, who had quite reached the end of her patience.

"And you," said Miss Arden, turning to Lovell, "what relationship have you entered upon with this woman? Have you the right to enter upon any relationship?"

"Mr. Lovell," broke in Dorothy Cassilis, "I can't stand this any longer; good-night."

"Nor can I," said Lovell angrily. "Allow me."

He took her by the arm to steady her along the deck to the companionway. But Dorothy Arden would not be denied. She seized him by the other arm.

"You must answer me," she said.

"Pardon me," he said with deadly courtesy, "you are in my way."

Which was apparently true in more sense than one. As he spoke, he put her aside as gently as he could, and passed along the deck with Dorothy Cassilis breathing indignant protests and remonstrances upon his arm.

What did it mean? What had happened? What relationship did or could Dorothy Cassilis bear to her husband? Dorothy Arden was a proud woman and a strong, but she gave way. It was dark; there was none to see; she bowed her head on the rail where they had stood, and her body shook with hard, dry, agonizing sobs. Presently she stopped and composed herself. To-morrow on

that island she would make opportunity to see him and demand that explanation she must have. To-morrow on that island—she little dreamed what that island held for her, for all of them.

## CHAPTER XII

### *The Sleepless Three*

MISS ARDEN had lost a point in the game. She was conscious that she had behaved abominably. That her feelings were so deeply engaged, her whole future at stake, did not justify her conduct even in her own eyes, although it excused it. Miss Cassilis, of course, knowing nothing of her relationship to Robert Lovell, could make no excuse whatsoever for her. The more she thought of the episode the more indignant she grew. With a woman's intuition she had divined that Dorothy Arden was desperately in love with Robert Lovell, and from the events of the night she realized that she would have to contest with the young secretary, whose qualities she by no means underrated, for the heart and hand of the man they both loved.

In the excitement of the moment no further opportunity had arisen for a continuance of the adorable conversation which had been interrupted. Lovell had kissed her hand with ardor as he bade her good-night, not because he was any more in love with her than before but because he was so angry with Miss Arden for having made a scene in which he occupied so difficult a position. As a matter of fact, he had only himself to blame for that situation. He had so far encouraged Miss Cassilis that she had deliberately intimated that she loved him and that she only awaited his word, that she was his for the asking. The girl would have died rather than have made such a confession otherwise. That his own petulant conduct, born of jealousy of his wife, had invited it, was an appalling thought. He had never dreamed of this outcome of his trifling, and he raged against the falsity of the position. Man-like, he found everybody guilty except himself.

No man on earth could fail to be flat-



tered by the obvious devotion of a girl like Dorothy Cassilis. The resentment and indignation of Dorothy Arden were equally flattering. At first he was illogically angry with Dorothy Arden, and then, with equal injustice, with Dorothy Cassilis. He passed a more or less sleepless night, for he saw himself involved in explanations which, from any point of view, would embarrass him and shame him in the eyes of both women. And what their feeling would be he could easily have imagined if his own dilemma had not bulked so large in his eyes. He had played the fool—almost the knave—in his jealousy. Now he was paying the price, paying it with an exceedingly bad grace. He wondered how he should meet the opportunities which must certainly be afforded the women on the island, the enchanted island, under their lee.

**D**OROTHY ARDEN also passed a sleepless night. All sorts of imaginings as to the exact meaning of Dorothy Cassilis' words occupied her tortured brain. She fancied that she knew Robert Lovell's character, but did she? How far was he bound by that hasty marriage? How far did he regard it as binding? She had the vaguest ideas as to the legal conditions. Having fallen in love with the other woman, was he planning to annul his marriage to her? She recalled with fear, vague but real, mysterious cablegrams that he had sent and received at several ports of call on this very cruise. What had they meant? Had Robert Lovell been carried away by the emotions of a moment when he married her? Could it be that he no longer loved her? Had he been fascinated by the charms of Dorothy Cassilis, which were sufficiently obvious to be admitted even by her rival?

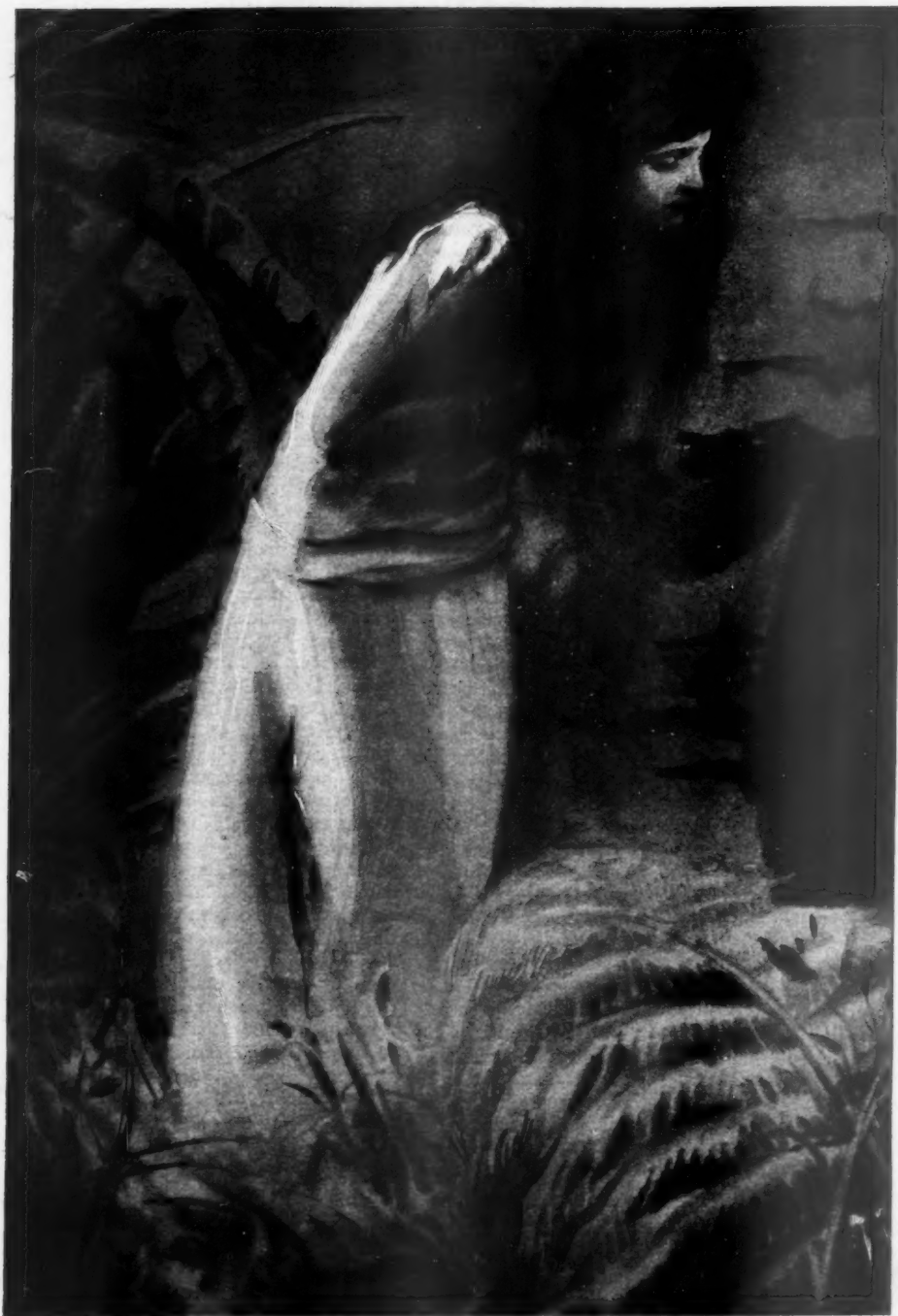
Well, Dorothy Arden was a woman of intense and passionate nature. She loved her husband with a devotion she was sure the other woman could not feel for him. She regretted bitterly her foolish jealousies and her provoking conduct with the Doctor; but it could not be too late to make amends, to show herself once more in the light in which he had admired and loved her. She was his

wife; no one could change that. Opposition invariably spurred her to greater efforts, and she determined by no means to resign her husband without a struggle. She would appeal to him. If that failed, she would fight.

Woman-like, she put the blame upon Dorothy Cassilis. She was sure that if his affection had wavered she could fix it, if she had a chance, if Miss Cassilis would but keep out of the way. She decided upon her course of action. In the morning she would formally apologize to her rival for her hasty and decidedly improper conduct, and later she would wring from fate an opportunity for a full explanation with her husband before it was too late. Perhaps the beautiful island which had beckoned them so alluringly would give her that chance.

The only one of the trio who slept was Dorothy Cassilis. Her resentment against Miss Arden was in no wise abated, but it was forgotten in the rush of joy at the thought of what might have happened had not she and Robert Lovell been interrupted. The wish being father to the thought, she was sure that she had won Robert Lovell's heart. Lacking that assurance, she would have been horrified at the remembrance of her own boldness; with it, she thrilled at the sweet recollection. The interruption was annoying, but further opportunities for continuing the conversation would present themselves without doubt, perhaps to-morrow on the island; and at that thought the color flooded her cheeks although there was none to see. Beneath the dainty lace and linen of the night her heart beat faster as she kissed the hand that he had taken, until at last she drifted off into quiet sleep. On the island, that happy and fortunate island, she would learn her fate; yes, on the island!

**D**OROTHY ARDEN'S apologies next morning were coldly delivered and as coldly received. Dorothy Cassilis would have refused to go with her had there been any other way. But both matrons on the boat declined her plea, and the state of Godfrey Lovell's health kept the Doctor to the ship, to his very great regret. Neither did Daniel Cassilis desire to ramble around a desolate island.



Dorothy Arden put her hand to her heart and groined in anguish.  
1166



"Water," said Dorothy Cassilis imperiously from her place beside Lovell.

The motor launch, towing a boat with some water casks in it, put the three on shore. The excursion did not bid fair to be pleasant. Robert Lovell, in the broad light of day, found his embarrassment between the two women far greater even than he had imagined it the night before. The common constraint was fearful even when in the launch with the officer and the seamen. It was worse when they were alone.

Miss Arden indeed offered to efface herself in some quiet nook and leave the other two to spend the day by themselves—and no one but she could know the effort she made in this proposition—but the suggestion had been promptly negatived, to her great relief, and so the ill assorted trio wandered inland across the white stretch of beach, leaving the ship people to fill their casks at the fall.

### CHAPTER XIII

#### *A Question and a Fall*

SINCE Robert Lovell had explored this island before, he remembered perfectly the way that led to the upland. It was a narrow path, partly natural and partly artificial, although the artificers had long since vanished from the memory of men. He led the way unhesitatingly through the fringe of palm trees to the foot of the wall, passing several clefts, or ravines, in the rock, through one of which a brook flowed, until beyond a bold promontory a larger way was opened before them. He recognized the wide rift at once. In the rainy season it was filled with water, but that season had passed, and it was now dry and easily practicable. Up this ravine he went with his two companions. The rift turned and ran parallel to the cliff about a quarter of a mile from the entrance, gradually mounting.

After a walk of perhaps a mile they came to the top. The path, for such it had become, ended in a narrow, rocky trail rising between inaccessible walls toward two huge boulders—whether placed there by Nature or the hand of man did not appear—which made a sort of natural gateway to the upland. Passing between these sentinel rocks and ad-

vancing a few steps through a thick undergrowth above which tall palms sprang, the three found themselves on a broad plateau, the shoulder of the huge, high hill which formed the center of the island. The plateau was rocky and largely bare of vegetation, which only grew in hollows into which earth had sifted and where rain-water sometimes collected. Its greatest diameter ran straight southward for a mile or more. On the edges the land fell away sheer to the lagoon, which as usual was bordered by a narrow strip of sand.

A fresh breeze blew gently across this rocky plateau, and as they walked down it toward the edge, a most enchanting picture was revealed. To one side lay the great yacht at anchor, thin trickles of smoke from her yellow funnels indicating low fires. Between the ship and the shore ran rocks and reefs. The sea was a deep and heavenly blue, thrown into high relief by the vivid whiteness of the spray as the waves rolled over rocks and islets and the great reef, the vast arch of which encircled the island as far as they could see it. The contrasting colors were as vivid as in a Della Robbia plaque. On the side opposite the yacht, on the far horizon, lay other islands.

It was still early morning. The sun's heat was not oppressive. In spite of the cross purposes at which they all played, they all felt and enjoyed the ravishing beauty of the scene. No one with a soul could be insensible to it. They talked together, of course, but their conversation was strictly impersonal. They made desperate efforts to throw aside their constraint. Lovell particularly exerted himself by relating his adventures when he had visited the island before. There was no one else on it then, and there was evidently no one, beside their own party, on it now.

"But I have heard that it has been sometimes visited by the peoples of those islands yonder," he said. "If there had been any sign of life on this island I should not have dared to bring you here."

"What kind of people are they?" asked Dorothy Cassilis.

"Savages, of course, of the lowest order."



"The yacht—it's gone!" she cried hysterically. "We are left behind!"

"Cannibals?"

"No, although many islands in this archipelago, especially New Guinea, below the horizon yonder, are tenanted by cannibals. These are a sort of Mohammedans. I don't think the Prophet would be proud of them if he could see them, for they hold his tenets lightly. They are his followers in name alone, just nominally Mohammedans, with a large admixture of ghastly and horrible primitive cults. Hindus and Arabs made voyages throughout these islands centuries ago, and the memory of them and of their religion lives to this day."

"Does anybody own them?" asked Dorothy Arden.

"The islands, you mean? Nominally each one is possessed by some civilized power: the Dutch claim most of all, but they are left mainly to themselves unless they get too obstreperous and invite a punitive expedition. Well, we are in no danger from them now, thank Heaven, and as it is getting on toward noon and as I have an idea this plateau gets pretty hot at mid-day, perhaps we had better be moving."

"Back to the ship?" asked Miss Cassilis.

"By no means; we have not begun to see all there is to see. There are some curious prehistoric ruins on the other side of the hill."

"What kind of ruins?" questioned Miss Arden.

"Great stone platforms, curiously carved images, hideous and grotesque, and there are some wonderful coral caves in the rocks, to say nothing of groves of cocoanut and sago palms—a delightful place for us to eat our luncheon; and then if you feel able to, we will climb to the top of the hill. There is a big stone platform there, and the view is magnificent."

THUS beguiling the time with elaborate effort at pleasant conversation which was really more successful than might be imagined, they wandered across the plateau, found the lovely grove and broke their fast from the luncheon which Lovell had brought from the yacht.

Leaving the two women to their own devices after luncheon, Lovell went away to make sure of the direction in which the caves and platforms lay and to find the most practicable way of ascending the hill. After his withdrawal, all thought of conversation between the two women promptly ended.

Dorothy Arden walked to the edge of the cliff and stared seaward. Dorothy Cassilis remained comfortably under the trees. Each woman was engrossed in her own thoughts. Lovell was away for some time. It was Dorothy Arden who decided to break the silence. She turned at last and walked straight back to Dorothy Cassilis. The latter, leaning her head upon her arm against the trunk of a fallen palm, had fallen into a light sleep, lulled by the silence, the peace and calm of the enchanted spot.

Miss Arden looked down at her sternly and relentlessly, bitter hatred in her heart, yet she could not but mark the charm of the sleeping woman. The gentle air breathed softly over her. A vagrant wisp of golden hair lay upon her delicately flushed cheek like a tendril. She looked smaller, younger, more child-like, more helpless, more appealing, than when awake. For a moment Dorothy Arden hesitated whether to turn away and leave Dorothy Cassilis to continue her sleep, but she had made up her mind as to the course to be taken, and the opportunity was at hand. There was no room for consideration in her heart. She spoke sharply, decidedly, almost roughly.

"Miss Cassilis."

Dorothy Cassilis slowly opened her eyes, looked around a moment, saw the other woman standing over her and rose slowly to her feet. Was the clash she had anticipated, and anticipated with eagerness, about to occur?

"Well," she said, boldly exchanging level glances.

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*Continued on page 1230 of this issue.*



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By Kennett Harris

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ILLUSTRATED BY WALTER J. ENRIGHT

THEY called James Alexander Macalaster "The Old Man" in the seven-story, half-block establishment on River Street, but, as a matter of fact, he was not so much past sixty and, by his own account, better than he ever was—hard as the nails whose containing kegs bore his brand to the four corners of the earth, keen as his own cutlery, full of spring as a Number Two screen-door hinge; old in experience, perhaps, and in the wisdom that experience brings, but otherwise as much like a two-year-old as most people who use the frisky similitude. And he knew his business, please to note; not just in a general way, but in detail, from muslin tacks to mowing machines, throughout the monumental stories that his genius and industry had reared.

James Alexander was not much to look at. His five feet nine and a half inches of inconspicuous personality were clothed in a ready-made, dark-mixture suit that had worn exceedingly well, considering the price; and the hat that crowned his thinning iron-gray locks was slightly dented, and would have been dusty if he had to brush it himself. As to his physiognomy, he had a long nose with a sinister inclination and the point that is supposed to indicate an inquiring mind; his eyes were gray and penetrating, his mouth large and thin-lipped, with mild mutton-chop whiskers meeting it at the corners to modify its severity.

It was in the office that young Mr. Harry Walters of the Barbers' Supplies quailed under James Alexander's stern regard, and quailing was not a habit of Harry's. He was a nice, fresh-colored young man with a manner that at times matched his complexion. At this time his self-confidence had shriveled from at least normal proportions.

"I'm sorry, sir," said the young man, meekly, "but you see buttonhole scissors aren't in my department. If it had been anything in my stock, of course I could have given him a price."

Mr. Macalaster's stern regard became a basilisk glare. Then he smiled—with his mouth exclusively. "It wasn't intentional on your part then," he said. "You didn't mean to throw the order to Quigley and Snegg; it was just your dense and deplorable ignorance. You'd have been quite as badly stumped if he'd asked you for a price on hedge-clippers or sheep-shears, eh? I suppose whenever you go outside of your department you shut your eyes and put cotton in your ears for fear you'll learn something, huh? You need all the room inside your head for shaving mirrors and safety-razors, is that it?"

"You could hardly expect me to be posted on everything in the house, sir," protested Harry, with some spirit.

"I suppose not," agreed James Alexander. "I am, myself, but that's all right. I'm interested in my business—price and sell and

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"I suppose not," agreed James Alexander. "I am, myself, but that is because I'm interested in my business. I can find, price and sell anything we've got,

whether it's buttonhole scissors or baling wire. If a man wants a size stovepipe that we haven't got in stock, I'll go to the bench and make it for him. I'll set up a cream separator or demonstrate a vacuum cleaner to make a sale. There's just one thing that I won't do, and that's let a customer get away from me and excuse myself by saying that I'd referred him to the right department. The whole house is your department. I'm not employing specialists. That's all."

He waved his hand in a gesture of dismissal and swung back to his desk. The chastened culprit crept humbly from the presence, but when he had closed the door behind him, he guardedly shook his fist at the top panel.

"You're an old liar," he said softly. "You're a first-class four-flusher and a prize-winning piffler. You—"

He broke off to smile at a bespectacled individual with a brown beard, who was coming down the passage. It was Ganz, the credit man, for whom, as a dignitary unswelled, Harry had a high regard.

"Notice any coal marks down my back?" Harry inquired in a whisper, turning himself about.

"They don't seem to show," Ganz answered, after a careful and quite serious inspection. "What have you been doing now?"

"Nothing, and that's a big part of the trouble. What do you know about the Nebular Hypothesis, Mr. Ganz?"

"Not a great deal," the credit man acknowledged. "Why?"

"Well, I wouldn't let the old man suspect it, if I were you," Harry cautioned him.

Ganz smiled appreciatively and rapped at the door, whereupon young Mr. Waters made rapid progress to the angle of the corridor. Mr. Macalaster looked up from his desk with a portentous frown as Ganz entered. It was evident that he had not yet recovered.

"Inefficiency and its parent, Indifference!" he complained. "There never was a time when there was so much theoretical talk about salesmanship and so little practical knowledge of it. All over the country, business houses are infested with clerks that don't know the first thing about the goods they handle—shoe-clerks

who wouldn't know a split buffalo hide from a kid skin, hat-clerks that couldn't tell you off-hand whether felt was dug or picked, dry-goods clerks who think that linen is some sort of high grade cotton fabric and that flax is raised to make poultices—a lot of young squirts who think they've got the whole art of selling down fine when they can read a price-tag and figure on a cost-mark and make a smooth talk! Not one in a hundred ever gets beyond that. I'd like to begin life over again, just to show 'em how I'd climb."

"We can't turn back the clock of Time, though," remarked Ganz.

"What the dickens has the clock of Time got to do with it?" demanded James Alexander, with considerable heat. "I could start in to-morrow, if I wanted to. Think I'd be handicapped by being over forty? Is that the idea? Have you got that fool notion? Think I couldn't get a job?"

"Oh, you might," Ganz conceded. "Still, you know, Mr. Macalaster, the man past forty really hasn't got much show."

"Rot!" snapped Mr. Macalaster. "If he's got the stuff in him, he'll stand a blamed sight better show than any unlicked cub. However, I've got something more to do than to argue a self-evident proposition. What have you got there?"

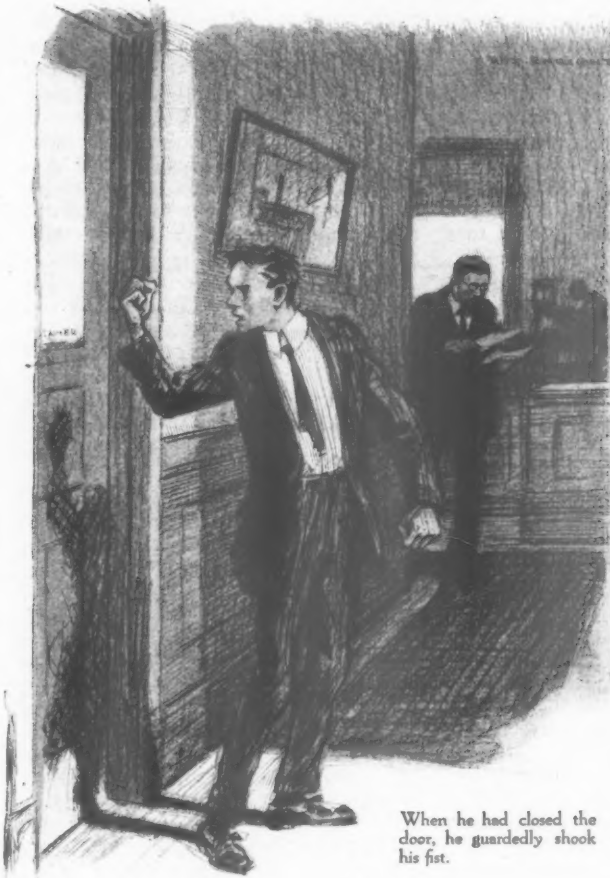
Ganz showed him, and for the next ten or fifteen minutes the two were busy. At last the credit man picked up his papers and prepared to go.

"Just a moment," called James Alexander. "As to that Orrin & Bross matter, we won't do anything before to-morrow. I notice their store is only a few blocks from where I live, so I guess I'll just look in and see what's the matter with them. Old Orrin seemed to me to be a mighty good man and talked as if he'd had lots of business experience. I don't know about Bross. Have you seen him?"

"No," Ganz replied. "The old fellow has done all of the buying. Well, just as you say."

He went away, but in the course of an hour he was back again.

"Oh, speaking of Orrin & Bross, I've just got a notice of dissolution of part-



When he had closed the door, he guardedly shook his fist.

nership. Bross takes the business and assumes the liabilities. He wants a little more time and an extension of credit. If he wanted anything more, I've got an idea that he'd mention it."

IT was certainly true, as Mr. Ganz had surmised, that Billy Bross had a habit of making his wants known. Such things as dumb aspirations or silent longings were not to be found in Billy's bright lexicon under any heading. As he put it, if the butter happened to be out of his reach, he was not too bashful to ask somebody to pass it and, like a good, bell-mouthed beagle, he could do some creditable running after a desired ob-

ject, even as he gave tongue. When he made up his mind that he wanted Minnie Walters he didn't give concealment half a chance at his cheek. Plainly, unequivocally and promptly he told the young woman what his wishes were, and found her quite willing to accede to them, which was somewhat odd, for Billy was not especially pleasing to the eye or altogether gracious of manner. He was a stubbly-built, sandy-haired, ruddy-complexioned young man, with a brisk way of speaking and moving; he had many virtues, but they had few surface indications.

Again, and similarly, when he wanted to be rid of his senior partner, he lost no time in acquainting that sheep-faced and pig-headed individual of the uncomplimentary fact, adducing reasons.

Now he wanted the

hardware trade of his district, preliminary to the establishment of a chain of stores throughout the city, and he was doing some advertising.

Well, in a way, he had Minnie. She had promised to marry him; but marriage seemed a long way off and still receding. At last the incompatible Orrin had retired, but he had done so in the face of disaster, and the trade of the district seemed to depend upon the House of Macalaster. Billy felt in his bones that the House of Macalaster was not favorable. He told Minnie so, as they sat together on the steps.

"What makes you think so?" Minnie asked.

"I've got a hunch," Billy answered. "Ever since they declined to send us any more goods and hinted at legal proceedings for the collection of their account, I've suspected that they were losing confidence in us, and now comes Quigley and Snegg that I'd been putting my trust in for a line of credit if Macalasters slipped up on me, and they've switched the conversation to cash. As if that wasn't enough, Jim quits me when I'm getting busy. He's got the cash bug too, and he wants me to raise his wages. That made me sore. There might be worse clerks than Jim, but I doubt it. Anyway, I guess I've got to run the joint alone until the sheriff comes along to take charge. Tough luck! Min, I'm as blue as an indigo paddle. If I jumped into the lake I'd tint it a deep cerulean hue from Millers to Mackinac."

"Billy!" reproved the young woman. She took him by his rather large ears and turned his gloomy countenance to her.

"Quite sure you're blue?" she asked, smiling.

One look at her pretty face was enough. Billy decided that he had abundant reason to be joyful and told her so. "Furthermore, I'm several rounds from being licked," he declared. "Yesterday's sales were away up, and to-morrow—Oh, girl! you want to be around bright and early to see my window. I'm going to fix it up to-night—automobile made up from the stock: coils of rubber hose for the wheels; bonnet, five-gallon garbage pail—or maybe I can fit in a wash-boiler. I'll see. Tin funnels for the side-lights, stove-pokers for the levers—I've got it all planned out, and if the street isn't blocked ten minutes after the curtain's raised, I'm going to be disappointed."

Billy's brown eyes glowed with enthusiasm. "What's the most attractive thing to a buyer, hey?" he pursued.

He almost glared at his fiancée as he snapped out the question, and she meekly answered that it depended on what the buyer was buying. "Don't be so fierce, Billy," she added.

"A low price," roared Billy. "And the most interesting thing is the price, high or low. Tag your goods. Let 'em know the worst, anyway. If your price is low,

Mister Man in the Street wants to know it. He'll come in and buy ten times when he can see, to once that he'll buy when he's got to ask. That's what's bringing me the trade, now that I've got my own way. If Macalaster would let me have what I need, I'd be all right."

"Mr. Macalaster gave Harry something that he needed to-day," observed Minnie, and Billy stared at her in amazement.

"A calling down," she explained. "He certainly needed it. As his suffering sister, I realized that keenly. It seems Harry sent a customer to the buttonhole-scissors department for the buttonhole scissors, and the customer got away to your friends Quigley and Snegg. Mr. Macalaster didn't like it."

"I don't blame him," said Billy. "Harry should have taken his man, instead of sending him. In selling goods—"

"Billy," interrupted Minnie.

"What is it?"

"Suppose we talk about something else. You're getting into a bad habit of carrying hardware about with you all the time. I've read of people being fined for that."

"I thought you'd be interested," said Billy, reproachfully.

"I am, up to a certain point," Miss Minnie assured him, "but when you've been sitting here nearly an hour and haven't said a word about my pretty new dress that I very nearly almost made all by my own self, I think I've got a right to complain. How do you like it?"

"It's swell," Billy told her, and he said it in no perfunctory way. His attention being called to the matter, he clearly perceived that the dress was swell—to the extreme descriptive limit of the word. Minnie was evidently satisfied on that point.

"Now tell me what you think of me—just me," she directed.

"I haven't got time to tell you all, and I never expect to have," Billy responded promptly. "Just as an outline, I think you're the finest specimen of a girl since Creation," he went on. "Folks have been trying to raise something like you for quite a few thousand years and 'something like' was the best they could do.



I've seen a few that were considered classy, and I've read about some in books, besides having fellows describe what they considered to be pippins, but not one in the bunch could stand on tiptoe and touch you. There's only one weak spot that I've noticed about you, Min, dear, and that's your poor judgment in picking a steady."

"I did that out of pity," murmured the young woman. "And then, whatever you are, you're truthful. I think I can listen to you talk hardware for a little, now. Can't you get anybody to help you in the store, Billy?"

"Maybe," he answered. "I've got to get somebody."

"I'll be over at noon and give you a chance to go to lunch, anyway," she said.

MR. MACALASTER made his usual early breakfast on the customary kipper and marmalade, for which he had an hereditary taste, and then, taking his dented hat from a butler who handled it as if it had been a priceless diadem properly belonging on a red velvet cushion, he fared forth to see what was the matter with Orrin and Bross. This sort of personal investigation was not at all uncommon with Mr. Macalaster. He enjoyed it. There was a Haroun-al-Raschid kind of flavor about it—he rarely disclosed his identity—as well as the pleasure derived from the exercise of a trained observation and a highly developed faculty of judgment. So he ambled along at a good round pace and hummed a tune as he ambled, until in a little while he came to the store distinguished by his ex-customers' sign.

It was further distinguished, this store, by a group of three men, a casual young woman and a whistling boy, who were gathered at the one show-window. Mr. Macalaster edged in and found himself admiring the automobile that Billy Bross had evolved from the most unlikely material. There were the garbage-bucket-bonnet, the tin-funnel-sidelight, the stove-poker-levers and twenty other ingenious adaptations of kitchen-ware to the representation of a smart run-about. It was a work of art, in its way,—a clear manifestation of genius—and was further justified by the circumstance

of one of the group presently detaching himself, entering the store and purchasing a fluted cake-pan of the pattern of the one that served as reflector to the headlight.

Mr. Macalaster followed this customer in and waited patiently while the sandy-haired young man who seemed in charge added two pie-plates and a glass egg-beater to the first cake-pan requirement. Dismissing the customer with a nice blending of affability and independence, the sandy-haired young man beamed on James Alexander.

"I'd like to see Mr. Orrin, if he's around," said Haroun.

"He isn't around," replied the young man, without any appearance of sorrow. "He's out of the business. Anything I can do for you?"

Here Mr. Macalaster hesitated. This young chap was doubtless Bross, and he had expected, in spite of the dissolution, to talk with the ex-member of the firm. That was his preference—a man old enough to have sense. He eyed Billy doubtfully, appraisingly. Billy eyed him in the same way and came to a not unnatural conclusion. This seedy old geeser, thought Billy, was most likely up against it and had come to strike Orrin for a loan or a job. He looked like a crony of Orrin's. At the same time, he seemed to be a fairly decent old party.

"Want a job?" Billy asked.

James Alexander was somewhat taken aback, although he had not expected distinguished consideration. He was about to disclaim any need of employment, in terms more or less resentful, when there flashed upon him the recollection of his yesterday's conversation with Ganz. Here was his chance to demonstrate his ability. Still, there was hardly time—

"Well, I don't know," he replied.

Billy looked less pleasant. "If you don't know, I guess you aren't the man I want to hire," he said, and then, "Excuse me," as he hastened to meet an entering customer.

James Alexander lingered, nevertheless. His sense of humor was rudimentary, but what there was of it was tickled. He watched Billy make his sale and admitted that for an unlicked cub

the young man did pretty well; then, as the customer departed, he approached the cub, who was then straightening his shelves.

"Are you Mr. Bross?" James Alexander asked, and, upon Billy's curt assent, "Well, I'd like to have you give me a trial, Mr. Bross. I know something about the hardware business. I had a store of my own some years ago."

Billy eyed him again. "Well, I'll try anything once," he said not too graciously. "What wages do you want?"

"I'll leave that to you," answered the applicant.

"I'm more and more afraid that you won't do," sighed Billy. "Well, peel your coat and I'll show you what to start on."

He led the way to the back of the store, where stood three small kitchen stoves, two very rusty and one gleaming and jetty black. "Can you polish stoves?" he asked.

James Alexander was disappointed. This was hardly what he had bargained for. "It's a little out of my line," he said, "but—"

"I don't like that talk," said the young proprietor, sharply. "I don't consider anything out of my line. I blacked that stove there and I can black the others if you don't want to. Oh, you do? Well, there's the polish and the dauber and a brush. Go to it."

He hurried off again, and it was ten minutes before he returned to find Mr. Macalaster working industriously on his first stove. The hardware magnate was streaked liberally with plumbago and had skinned his knuckles in two places.

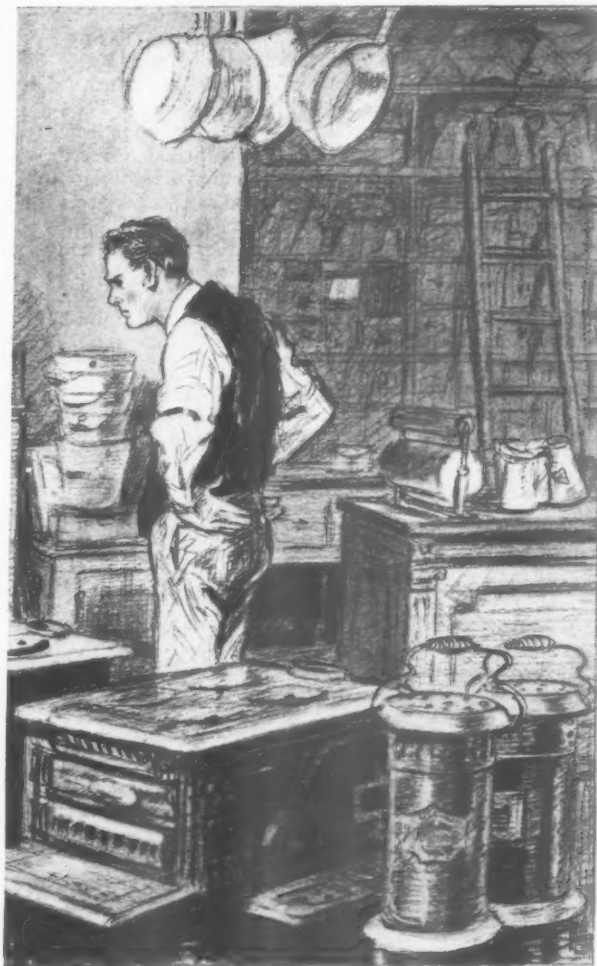
"Great Scott!" exclaimed Billy, after a moment's silent observation, "don't



"Great Scott!" exclaimed Billy, "don't you know enough

you know enough not to let the blacklead dry before you start rubbing? Here, let me take that dauber." He snatched it, impolitely, and briskly smeared an oven door. "Now watch!" He rubbed vigorously. "Put a little elbow-grease on it, don't you see. There! Now look at that and then look at what you've been doing. Some difference—what? Now, do you think you can do that?"

James Alexander opined that he could, although his impulse was to hurl the saucer of blacking at the young man's



not to let the blacklead dry before you start rubbing?"

sandy head and then depart with dignity. But that oven door unquestionably looked better than the rest of the stove. He took back his brushes quite meekly.

"Hurry it along," Billy urged. "There's three more of them down in the basement, and I want to get action on them. Here's one I propose to sell before noon."

Presently, there was another little incursion of trade. James Alexander, looking and listening with attention, approved of the manner in which the young

man handled it. He himself was conscious of a growing desire to please this brusque and exacting employer of his, wherefore he applied to the polishing all the elbow-grease at his command, and after a little Billy made a flying visit of inspection.

"That's a little better," he vouchsafed. "You're beginning to get the hang of it. But, my goodness, man! you're slow."

It was fortunate that the door was darkened just then by a bulky female form. As it was, James Alexander had taken a step forward with the intention of relieving his mind when Billy hastened away, but the distraction allowed time for the sober second thought that the boast to Ganz had to be made good: that a man of—well, over forty—could not only get a job, but hold it and climb—supposing him to have the stuff in him. It was up to James Alexander to prove that he had the stuff—make Billy Bross see it.

Another opportunity came—a summons to attend a woman who wanted clothes-hooks. He sold two dozen and felt quite elated, especially after he had followed up this success by the sale to another customer of a small granite sauce-pan. In the meantime Billy had sold his stove.

"We'll move another one up as soon as I can get an expressman to take this out of the way," Billy observed. "By the way, you seem to have a poor idea of selling. That woman who bought the clothes-hooks was in the market for bureau-drawer handles and curtain-rods among other things, or I miss my guess. She was fixing up a house, wasn't she?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said James Alexander.

"Can't you reason? Haven't you any imagination? Why else would she want as many as two dozen? Use your head, man. If a fellow bought a can of paint, wouldn't you conclude that he might want a brush? Holy smoke! always size up your customer and don't be afraid to help him out with a suggestion. Well, you'd better get on with your polishing. I'll step out and scare up that expressman now."

"Confound your impudence!" growled Macalaster, as Billy disappeared, but his reflections were interrupted by a man who wanted a cupboard bolt. He looked for cupboard bolts in vain, and was still looking when Billy returned and found them for him.

"I don't expect you to know the stock as well as I do," said Billy, when the customer had gone, "but I think that a man with average intelligence might have figured out the location of those bolts. There were window-catches right above the box and door-knobs below—all kinds of builders' hardware as plain as the nose on your face. And you say that you've had experience in the business!" Billy's scorn was withering.

"It was an oversight," returned James Alexander, testily. "Anybody might have made it. The box is the same size and shape as the window-catch box, and I naturally supposed that it held window-catches."

"Notwithstanding the fact that it was labeled '*bolts*,'" said Billy, sarcastically. "But perhaps your eyesight isn't as good as it used to be," he added, more kindly.

"Perhaps it isn't," James Alexander said, sourly. He walked away to keep from saying more. It seemed strange to him that whatever he did was the wrong thing—and exasperating. Not discouraging, for there was a dogged, obstinate strain in the Macalaster blood that prevented that, and he was all the more determined to compel Billy's respect before he was through with him. But noon came, and he had won no word of commendation.

Billy told him to go and get his dinner, and he hurried to a little cheap

restaurant near by. He ordered a T-bone steak, which cost him twenty-five cents, including bread and butter and potatoes, and he was astonished at the appetite that he had acquired. Feeling somewhat refreshed, he went back to the store and was surprised to see a remarkably good-looking girl perched on a high stool in the glazed cubby-hole that held the safe and the books. She smiled at him in a very friendly and winning manner and supposed that he was the gentleman who was helping Mr. Bross. "He told me to ask you to finish cleaning that stove, please," she said.

"All right," said James Alexander quite cheerfully. He took a good look at the young woman, as he removed his coat. Given the opportunity, almost anyone would have done the same thing.

"Are you the bookkeeper, young lady?" he inquired.

She smiled again, showing a dimple in her left cheek. "Not exactly," she answered. "I—I'm a friend of Mr. Bross' and I help him sometimes."

"He's a very fortunate young man, Miss—"

"Miss Walters," supplied Minnie. "I don't see why, though," she added, disingenuously.

James Alexander smiled and applied himself to the stove.

"How beautifully you are polishing that!" commented Miss Walters after she had watched a few minutes.

"Mr. Bross doesn't think so," said James Alexander, grimly. His heart warmed to this young person, nevertheless.

"Don't you ever believe it," denied Minnie, eagerly. "I know William Bross, and his bark is worse than his bite. I hope you will stay with him," she added, and then cried out in accents full of pity: "Oh, you have hurt your hand! It's all bleeding."

"It's nothing at all," James Alexander assured her. "Just a little skin off the knuckle."

"Little things get to be very serious, sometimes," said Minnie. "That ought to be washed and something put around it."

Not content with advising, she led the sufferer, perforce, to the sink, washed



"He's a very fortunate young man, Miss ——"



his abrasions and bound them with strips that she tore from his handkerchief. She was surprised to find that the handkerchief was clean and of good quality, but she had too much tact to speak of it.

The operation was barely concluded when Billy returned. His grin was not sympathetic, but he refrained from comment until Minnie and he were alone in the cubby-hole.

"The poor old dear!" exclaimed Minnie. "You can laugh, but it must have hurt awfully, and with all that dirt grimed in, he might have got lockjaw. 'Deed he might. And I like him, Billy. He's trying as hard as ever he can, I'm sure."

"He's all right, only he wont do," opined Billy, with a frown. "He goes at everything wrong-end-to and tail-foremost—fumbles. He reminds me of Orrin every move that he makes. Too old; that's what's the matter with him, Min. But we'll see how he gets along this afternoon."

He made this last provision insincerely, to please her. He knew how the old man would get along.

Shortly after, Minnie departed, nodding a friendly farewell to James Alexander as she went. During the afternoon business was fairly good and would have been much better, James Alexander could see, if the stock had been more complete. Again and again Billy Bross was obliged to admit that he was all out of something or another and had no substitute that he could recommend; but there was no denying that the young man made the most of what he had, and James Alexander was called from his drudgery several times to wait on customers. Each time the veteran did his utmost, by the suavity of his manner and the force and aptness of his description, to make sales that would count, but, try as he might, there seemed to be something lacking in his methods. His representations were received with cold disbelief, and his suggestions fell flat. He knew that Billy was watching him with a cold and critical eye, but he strove on pluckily. At the last he was set to bringing from the basement heavy stuff of one sort and another, and the unwonted physical exertion was

harder on him than he had believed possible. His knee-joints seemed to have loosened strangely; his back ached excruciatingly; his hands shook in sympathy with his knees and his breath came in gasps that he tried in vain to control.

Ten minutes to six! James Alexander consulted a watch that was a gift from his wife and whose value, at a moderate appraisal, would have stocked two such establishments as Orrin & Bross. It was attached to his person by a plaited leather guard, originally black, but worn russet with handling. There had been an ornate chain with the watch, but James Alexander wore that in the drawer of his dressing stand. Ten minutes to six! The River Street house had been closed for twenty minutes past, and here was he, working harder than any man on his pay-roll, after hours and for a conceited young ingrate who would never even know the honor that had been done him!

He bent to the bale of half-inch manila that he had just brought up and began to trundle it to its bin under the nail counter. As he passed the cubby-hole, he noticed by the merest glance that Bross was there in conversation with a young man whose back, in its nattily shaped coat, seemed vaguely familiar. A little later he heard a sound like a subdued whoop and a laugh that seemed suddenly choked off. He paid no particular attention to this, being engaged in pushing the rope-end through its appointed augur hole. He had succeeded in this and was tying the knot to secure it, when Bross called him.

"Coming!" he called in return. Then he sighed, for he knew that the summons meant that the game was over. He had played and lost—lost quite a stake, too—certain riches of self-esteem and confidence, so that he felt poor indeed. But he would show himself a game loser.

Billy was alone, perched upon the stool. He waved James Alexander to the chair by the desk, and, to that gentleman's astonishment, he did it with a pleasant smile. "Well," he said, in a loud and cheerful tone, "about time to call it a day, isn't it? Sit down; I want to have a little talk with you."

James Alexander was surprised, but



he maintained an impassive expression and seated himself with an air of dignity that decidedly impressed Billy Bross.

Mr. Bross showed no sign of nervousness, however, but went straight to his point, as was his manner. "I think you're the man I want, and I'm going to make you a proposition for a steady job," he said.

A little patch of color showed itself on each of James Alexander's cheeks alongside of his whiskers, but his eyes never blinked.

"Maybe you think I'm a hard man to work for," Billy went on, with a conciliatory grin. "Well, I work myself and I expect my help to do the same, but I know you aren't afraid of work. I've been driving you pretty hard all day, and giving you the rough side of my tongue, but I did that to try you out. You came through all right, too. Well, I can see that you know a whole lot about the hardware business and I've got you sized up as a worker. Don't get the idea that I want you to black stoves. I can get a nigger for twenty cents an hour to do that. I want your experience and I want your brains—see?"

James Alexander blinked once or twice, cleared his throat and nodded.

"Well, what do you say?" asked Billy, winningly. "I can't offer you much of a salary to start with, but when I get stocked up I'm going to do some business, I can tell you that, and if you make good, as I think you will, I'll treat you right. What do you say?"

James Alexander got up rather suddenly. His cheeks were redder than ever, and his eyes were very bright. "I'm much obliged to you, Mr. Bross," he said, "but I can't work for you at the present time—for reasons. Not that I've any fault to find. Quite the contrary. I—well, that's how it is, and, if you'll excuse me, I guess I've got to be going."

"I'm sorry," said Billy, and he looked it. "Well, you're not going without your pay, are you? Here it is. You've earned it, and I wish I could afford to make it more. Couldn't come and help me out to-morrow? No? Good luck to you, then."

He handed James Alexander a two-dollar bill and a fifty-cent piece and shook hands with him.

"Good luck to you," returned James Alexander, and walked lightly out of the store, his head well up and his chest expanded and his hand clutched tight on his day's wages.

SO now, if the conversation happens to turn to the miscalled Osler theory of senile decay or the handicap of years in the race for the elusive job, James Alexander Macalaster feels qualified to speak with authority.

"Poppycock!" he explodes. "Gentlemen, let me tell you of a little experience that I had a little while ago, and I'm no callow youngster. I don't say that it was a remarkable experience, because I'm satisfied that it isn't. But it goes to show that a man's age has nothing to do with his chances of employment, if he isn't actually decrepit. If he's got the stuff in him he can get a job and keep a job. It was like this. . . .

"And he was a young man himself, mind you, and a good salesman. 'You're the man I want,' says he, and when I told him that I couldn't work for him he pretty nearly wept.

"Let me tell you I'm as good as ever I was."

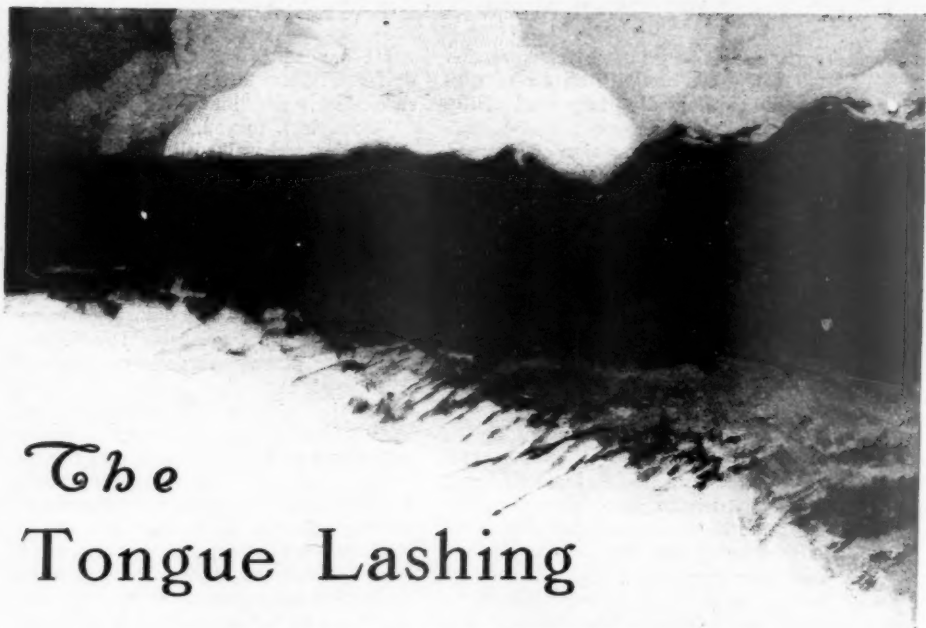
To Mr. Ganz he said: "Let that young Bross have anything he wants, in reason. He's a comer, that fellow. I've been making inquiries about him and I'm satisfied that we wont run any risk by standing behind him."

Beyond that, he was discreetly reticent with Mr. Ganz.

To himself he said, "I don't know but I'd let the rascal fight his own way, if it wasn't for that girl of his."

As for Billy Bross, he is mighty thankful that Harry Walters happened to visit the store on his way home at the time that he did. "Because I'd have fired the old rooster without putting on my gloves to do it," he said. "Hal, he put me in mind of old Orrin all the time."

And Minnie said, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Billy! He's an old dear, and it's too bad I can't go and tell him so without spoiling everything."



# The Tongue Lashing

*A story of the frozen North by the woman who  
has put a new spirit in short story writing.*

By Berthe Knatvold Mellett

Author of "A White Woman," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK B. HOFFMAN

**J**ERRY SULLIVAN turned a pebble round and round between his thumb and finger. Suddenly he shuddered and cast it away, and it rattled down to silence in the gaping gullet of a shaft in the mountain-side.

"God," he muttered, "what a lot a hole in the ground can swallow."

Then, as though the little gray stone still dragged at him with deadly interest, he dropped to his knees and crept forward to the rim of the shaft, clinging to the salal roots at the edge and hanging his head and shoulders out into the yawning depth. He loosed another pebble and dropped it down, and another and another, listening as they rattled to the bottom.

"And to-morrow I'll go down and shovel them into the bucket. Then I'll climb up and haul at the windlass till they're above ground again," he muttered.

It was growing dark, and only the white comb of the mountain-range above was alight with the sun, already screened from the low country by the forest. Around him the silvered ghosts left by an ancient forest fire whitened in the fading light, and the dye of the vine maple deepened until it splotched the landscape like clotted blood. A marmot called from a crag. A boulder loosed itself far up the mountain and came tearing past, crashing from ledge to ledge down into the ramping river in the canyon below.



With the sun gone, the thin air of the foothills sifted through his clothing and stung his flesh with a thousand frost-tipped needles. But still he hung his head and shoulders into the abyss, clinging to the salal roots of the rim with one hand, loosening pebbles with the other and listening as they rattled to the bottom and were gulped by the mud.

There was a light step behind him, and Margaret Sullivan laid a quick, strong hand on his shoulder. He crouched back on his knees away from the shaft, his head in his hands.

"It's got me," he groaned. "A kid rattling a shot in a can has got more purpose than me."

Margaret dropped to her knees beside him and dragged his hands down from his face.

"What are you talking about, Jerry?" she whispered.

"It's got me—the country—working all day alone in a dark hole, month in and month out—the awfulness of it—and the failure—"

He shivered, and she pressed his cold hands to her warm bosom.

"You know then," she began very gently, "that the mine's no good? You've satisfied yourself about it? You're willing to give up?"

He turned his head away as though there was an unbearable sting in the very mercy of her eyes.

"I've known it for months," he faltered, "—months and months. But I can't get away from it. I can't let go. I hoped as long as a man could—hoped like a fool until there was no hope left. But I kept on shoveling gravel into a bucket and hoisting it to the top. Seemed like I could make it pan out—like I could think gold until it was there. I'd shovel broken quartz and think gold—gold—gold—until little wriggling stringers like brass nerves danced before my eyes whichever way I looked. And all that ever came of it was a splitting head. There's nothing in the mine. Ha! Nothing in it? Everything's in it. Every cent—yours and mine. All the things you and the kids had coming—home and clothes and school—in that black hole. And I can't let it be. It drags me back day after day."

He shivered again and made as though to rise. She put her hand on his shoulder and pulled him down to her.

"The children are at supper down in the cabin. We can't talk before them, and we must talk." Her voice was strained and shrill with repressed emotion. "It's no shock to me, telling me the mine's no good. I've known it, from the first. I begged you to stay out of it, but you had your mind set, Jerry, and I let you have your way. I'm not throwing that up to you, but I'm calling it to mind, so you can see what it's up to you to do. I gave up what I had a right to, staked everything on a gamble I didn't believe in. Now the game's up, and there's nothing left—but you. It's up to you to turn yourself to account. You've got to put your shoulders and your trade and your wits to work now, and make good to us what you lost. You can't let your mind and your body go to pieces, sitting on a rock-pile and throwing stones down a hole. You can't make gold show in the quartz if it isn't there. You took our chances and gambled them away on a game of pick and shovel. Now you've got to get yourself together and earn us new chances."

"You say the country's got you. That's an old excuse. Every tramp that ever drifted to the woods to loaf away his life has said the same. The country's got you, eh? Well, how about me? Don't you think the country could get me too, if I'd let it? Don't you know the asylums are full of women who heard nothing but the wind yelping in the trees until their poor minds broke? I fight the country and the loneliness. I owe it to the children not to let the country get me. And you can't let it get you—because you owe us yourself. What it's up to you to do right now is to get out of here and earn us a decent place to come to."

He was gazing at her with staring eyes.

"What do you mean—get out of here?" he questioned. "How can I? There's no market as I know of for stones and dead timber. And that's all we have to sell. You don't seem to understand that the last cent we had has gone into that hole. There isn't stage and



He held her face between his hands and looked into her eyes for a long time. "All right, my girl, I'll go," he said.

railroad fare left to get you and the kids down to town."

"I'm not talking about us, now," she answered. "I'm talking about you. You can get out, can't you? You can walk to Ashford, and from there you can work down on a section gang, if there's no other way."

"But you—you and the kids?"

"We'll stay here."

"Alone?"

"There's no other way, Jerry."

There was something ineffably tender in her shrewishness now it had passed. Jerry got to his feet and drew her up to him. She was a little woman, but even in the gathering darkness there was something resolute and capable about her—in the way her black hair crinkled back from her brow, in the lift of her lithe body, and the quick play of her hands.

"If you'd only scolded me out of it when I wanted the mine, Margaret—if you only had!"

"It's the first time I ever held my tongue, Jerry, and I promise it'll be the last. And I'm scolding you now."

He held her face between his hands and looked into her eyes for a long time.

"All right, my girl, I'll go," he said. "And I'll be back by mid-winter for you and the kids. It won't take me long to get on my feet."

"I can't have the country get you, Jerry," she whispered.

THE south wind shifted north, and the soft rains of autumn chilled first and then froze to sleet. Gradually the snow from the peaks crept down over the foothills, filling the hollows, leveling the hills. The silver forest put on a garment of ice that caught the light and held it in shimmering penumbra against the sun. Back of the Sullivan cabin the mountains magnified themselves in the crystal of the air, merging with heaven, glacial and bitterly superb. In the canyon the river, muffled in ice, snored and grumbled like a hibernating demon. Silence, permeating the frigid ether, rivaling the very solemnity of the pageants of day and night, sat on her frosty magnitudes, spinning at the web of eternity.

It was winter in the mountains—winter, with the mink and marten leaving trails across the sheeted earth—winter, with the cougars crying in the rocks.

Margaret Sullivan was white of face now, and beside the courage in her eyes the weird sisters of isolation sat unbidden.

"It's one thing to send your man away," she whispered with trembling lips into the sweet neck of her baby, "and it's another to have him gone."

Sometimes a hunter or trapper on snow-shoes came out of the forest into the dead timber and saw the smoke from her cabin. Then there was a little flurry of cooking, and the exchange of grouse or bear meat for coffee and cookies. Now and then Old Man Steve, a pocket miner from across the ridge, tramped over to see to her wood-pile. As long as he stayed, the children herded noisily about him. And when he went they hung shrieking to his boot-straps until their mother called them off. Then he would be gone. And Silence would take up her spinning of eternity where she had left off.

One night in mid-winter, Margaret Sullivan sat by her kitchen stove. On the floor before her was the wash-tub in which the weekly ablutions had been administered to her brood. She was tired, and welcomed the fatigue that tugged at her back. It meant sleep on the instant of going to bed, release from the fears that haunted her waking hours. She rose and emptied the soapy water at the door. Then like a child who suddenly recoils from the dark, she shrank back and shot the bolt. She stood against the door, breathing hard and listening. There was no sound. She went back to her chair by the stove and held her shaking hands toward the warmth.

Then there came a knock at the door.

She sat rigid in her chair, her hands extended toward the stove. And the knock came again. The shot-gun stood behind the door, and she reached for it and locked her fingers around the breech. For the third time the knock sounded through the cabin. It could not be Old Man Steve. He had been there the week before. Besides, he always came in the morning and announced his com-



ing from afar with his tuneless whistle. It might be a trapper or a hunter, asking directions. But why this panic, this creeping horror that curdled her blood?

She shoved the bolt aside and stepped back into the room, the gun held ready in her hands. A man staggered in and dropped into her chair by the stove. He did not seem to notice the gun. He scarcely noticed her. Some inward happening seemed to engross him, as he sat by the stove, oblivious to things around him. His eyes rolled toward each other, and his jaw sagged like the jaw of a dead man. The hands he twisted together in his lap were blue with the cold, but he did not hold them out to warm them at the stove. Under his thick clothing his frame seemed to have fallen in, rib against rib, chest against spine.

"I'm Cole McGraw," he mumbled, and his voice halted as though he searched in his mind for missing details. "I live up the canyon—fourteen miles. I come to tell you something."

Keeping her eyes upon him, Margaret backed into the room where her children were sleeping. There she reached out blindly for a chair, and dragged it into the kitchen. Then she shut the door

between the rooms, set the chair before it and sat down, facing her visitor.

"I come to tell you something," he went on mumbling. He turned toward her, his face twitching like a grimacing shadow.

"I want to tell you so you'll see to the—remains."

Margaret felt the nerves coil and creep like snakes at the roots of her hair, and her fingers tightened on the gun. Her visitor sat beside the stove, his hands clasping and unclasping between his knees, his body slacked together like a ruin. He did not look the man to have done a murder—and yet the atmosphere of some sickening deed seemed to emanate from him.

"Remains—what remains—where?" Margaret leaned towards him and threw her whole strength into the gaze she leveled upon him. He shrank back, his collapsed body tumbling away from her. But his eyes straightened themselves in their sockets, and the twitching of his face grew still.

"There aint no remains—yet," he whimpered. "I came to tell you—and now you wont listen."

He subsided into himself petulantly.

"Yes, I will listen. Now you go on. Hear me? You tell me quick what you came to tell." The impatience and insistence of the shrew was in her voice, and he squirmed in his chair.

"Well, I am, aint I?" he whined. "I'm telling you about Nellie, and you wont listen. Nellie,"—he turned and peered into the dark corner behind him and lowered



She stepped back into the room, the gun held ready in her hands.

FRANK B. MURPHY



"She comes once a year—in the winter—when it's cold and still. She come to me to-day—that's why I'm here."

his voice,—“Nellie's been—dead—ten years. I was going to marry her.” He leaned toward her, pointing out the progress of some imaginary problem with the index finger of his right hand in the palm of his left. “There had been some stories about Nellie's mother.

But she was dead, and I figured no one but me and Nellie counted.

“Then my father came in from a cruise—he was a timber cruiser—and he says I sha'n't marry Nellie. I just laughs. He goes to Nellie, and Nellie says so long as I'm satisfied with her she's going

to stick by me.

Then my father lights out on another cruise. And me and Nellie, we think we'll get married before he can come back and kick up another fuss. So we got ready. Nellie got her clothes—and I got a cook-stove and a outfit and rented a house.

“Then the day come for the wedding, and the preacher got up and says if there's any reason why we two sha'n't wed, to speak up. There's a clatter in the back room and some one clears his throat. Then my father comes in and says he's something to say.

He begins to talk, and he says—that Nellie and me is sister and brother.

“So I come off here to the woods. And after a bit Nellie dies. The day she dies she comes to my cabin door—in the shape of a fawn nibbling my potato tops. The next year she comes like a grouse hen—and again like a cotton-tail—and once like a she-bear. I caught a trout once—and when I went to pull the hook out of its mouth—I seen Nellie looking out of its eyes.

Got so I was afraid to shoot, for fear I'd harm Nellie. I took to living on bacon from the store—I couldn't be comfortable eating anything out of the woods.

“She comes once a year—in the winter—when it's cold and still. She come to me to-day—that's why I'm here.

“I was reading an old Ashford *Argus*, and I had the kettle on the stove, singing to break up the silence. I'd read that *Argus* every day for a month—but even old reading's better than thinking. Well, ma'am, along with the singing of the kettle I hears another sound. Something's buzzing and bumming around my head. I turns the paper to make it rattle, and I reads for all I'm worth. Then along comes a fly and lights on the *Argus*. And I tell you, ma'am, I'm scared. It aint the right time of year for flies—with

the world froze stiff to the rim. I swats at it, and it h'ists itself in the air and circles round my head. There's something familiar about the hum of it. So when it comes and lights on my *Argus* again, I holds my breath, and I harks with all my ears. And it's Nellie—flustering and fussing with the cold. I talks to her—but she don't answer me. I reaches out my hand to touch her—but she flies away and don't come back till I'm quiet.

"I begs her to talk—to tell me how things is with her. I sits and holds the *Argus* so still that my hands get cramped and pains shoot up my arms. My eyes ache in my head from trying to see enough of Nellie to last me for another year. Then I notice she's got something on her mind. I don't say a word—I just sit still and wait. And ma'am, I'm telling you God's truth—word by word she points out a message—crawling here and there across the paper. 'It's time for you to come,' she points out. I whispers 'How?' But it aint scarcely a whisper because my tongue sticks to the top of my mouth. She lifts herself in the air, and I reaches up for her—I'm scared she'll go without telling me how. She comes down again and lights on my rifle standing in the corner. Then there, before my eyes, she begins to fade. She lifts in the air like a speck of smoke—and is gone.

"So I'm going to Nellie—like she said—by the rifle way. And I come to you to ask would you be so kind as to send the first trapper that happens along—to look to the remains?"

He stopped, and the muscles of his face and neck twitched horribly. Margaret Sullivan sat against the door behind which her children slept. Spots of red burned on her cheeks, and her blue eyes narrowed to thin angry slits.

"Remains?" she snapped. "You think I'll trouble about your remains? You, who come to a woman alone with a story like that?"

Then she "lit into him." She set the shotgun back behind the door, and filled her lungs with the warm air of the cabin.

"You—you dog, you!" she began. "It would be too good for you if your bones lay and rotted in your bunk. You

come to me with a story like that—me alone, snowed in, with three babies, in the dead of winter! Do you think I can forget it? Don't you know my flesh will creep to the tune of your vile lie until spring and my man come back? You weak-minded coward, scaring women with ghost tales. You've let the country get you. You've sat down and nursed your grievance until now it's bigger than you, and you want to put it off on some one who can carry it. It's done for your mind, and now you'd poison mine with it. Lord, if there was only a man around—to whip you as you deserve. Why didn't you go to Old Man Steve with your troubles? I'll tell you why. You were afraid to. Afraid he'd lick you off the place with his belt. And he would, too. Ten years you've loafed in the woods. Ten years you've been too lazy to get up and dust and chase the bugaboos away. If you'd logged your place off, there wouldn't be shadows, either in your mind or the woods, for spooks to sneak around in. Look at you—caved in—dumped down—done for! Nothing but bacon from the store—ugh! If you'd killed and eaten more jack-rabbits and listened less to flies buzzing in your brain, you wouldn't be out scaring women to-night. Go back to your cabin, and crook your toe around the trigger of your rifle—and good riddance. But don't think for a minute I'm going to send any real man over there to spoil his hands with you. Stand up—if you can. Stand up! Now get out of here—hear me—get!"

She rose and opened the door. The sharp knife of the wind cut through the warmth of the cabin, and through the opening the stars twinkled like jewels caught in the prongs of the silver forest.

"Get!" She flung her arms out toward the night.

He shambled out, and she closed the door and bolted it behind him. Then her strength and her courage ebbed. The stimulant of her anger was spent, and she stood shaking like one with a fever, her hand upon the latch, her ear against the door, mistaking the pounding of her heart for his returning footsteps. The red spots washed out of her cheeks, and

in the pallor they left behind, her eyes sank like extinguished embers. "Jerry," she moaned, "I'm scared; the country's got me—I'm scared—"

As one who bends frozen limbs and winces with the pain, she sank to the floor. There was the sound of a door opening softly. She did not hear. Little warm feet paddled across the cabin floor, and moist, sweet lips mouthed her face. She gave a sobbing cry and hugged a tender, yielding body to her breast.

LONG before the gilt deckle of the mountains was picked out against the morning sky, Margaret Sullivan stood at her cabin window. In the snow a troubled trail led up the canyon and away into the mountains. As far as her eyes could reach through the gray vapor of dawn, the trail led on and on. Fourteen miles, she remembered, he had said. She went to the door. No sign of trapper or hunter in the silver forest. No track, other than the grimly troubled one that staggered off to the mountains. The darkness, filling the deep footsteps, made them look like wells of blood. She went to the room where the children slept, and assembled her snow-shoes and furs. Then the baby opened his little shining eyes and smiled, and she knew she could not go. She came back and stood again at the window.

Gradually the gold in the east flowed down and gilded the snow. The staggering tracks to the mountain looked less like blackened blood and more like the footsteps of a man. A weasel came out and trailed across the light. The smoke from her fire caught the wind and wafted frontwards like a blowing veil. She pressed her face against the pane and prayed that the sunshine would last.

Then in the distance something moved. Through the frost upon her window it wavered like a figure on a swaying curtain. She caught her breath, and her nails bit into her palms. Whatever it was, bear or man, the thing came on. She threw back the window, and the bitter-sweet intoxicant of the morning drifted in. Something big and comfort-

ing in the oncoming figure, something that hulked itself against the sky like Jerry, caught her heart and set it swelling in her throat. "He said he'd come back by mid-winter. He said it wouldn't take him long to get on his feet. And here he is!" her heart sang. But her lips were white and inarticulate. She leaned far out the window, and a thin tremble of voice followed up the canyon. Carrying like the blast from a trumpet, came an answering "Hello there!"

FOURTEEN miles up the canyon hiked Jerry Sullivan, and shoved gently and gingerly on the door of a secluded shanty. Out on the winter air whiffed the fragrance of frying meat and the tang of coffee. Silhouetted against the snow that banked the solitary window sat the occupant of the shack, chin up, coffee cup poised and waiting, munching a mouthful. His face was twitching, humorously, the corners of the mouth dragging upward into a smile. Jerry Sullivan, prepared for death, recoiled from life. Cole McGraw turned, and with coffee cup suspended in air, eyed the intruder.

"I just came by," Jerry began lamely. "Come in," the host called, and he shoved another straight chair into place at the table.

"I can't come in—I'll be going—"

Cole McGraw came to the door, coffee cup in hand:

"Did the woman down the canyon send you?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Jerry.

"Well say—you see what I'm eating? Fried cotton-tail! You go back and tell her that—will you? And you see them trees standing outside? Come spring, I begin logging them off and floating them down the river. Tell her that, will you? And say—tell her this—fer me. There aint no man living can keep his right mind without a good tongue-lashing, when it's coming to him. And you ask her fer me, if it'd be too much trouble to her, if I should come over and have her rip the hide off me like she did last night—about once a year?"

**Another short story by Berthe Knatvold Mellett will appear in an early issue of The Red Book Magazine.**



# Philo Gubb's Greatest Case

*THE correspondence school detective is engaged  
to solve the mystery of the murder of H. Smitz.*

By Ellis Parker Butler

*America's Foremost Humorist*

ILLUSTRATED BY REA IRVIN



**P**HILO GUBB, wrapped in his bath-robe, went to the door of the room that was the headquarters of his business of paper-hanging and decorating as well as the office of his detective business, and opened the door a crack. It was still early in the morning but Mr. Gubb was a modest man and, lest anyone should see him in his scanty attire, he peered through the crack of the door before he stepped hastily into the hall and captured his copy of the Riverbank Daily *Eagle*. When he had secured the still damp newspaper, he returned to his cot bed and spread himself out to read comfortably.

It was a hot Iowa morning. The thermometer had registered 90 degrees at sun-down; at midnight the mercury had risen to 94, and in early dawn it stood at 96 with every promise of a ferociously hot day—one that would strain the thermometer to the utmost.

Business was slack with the celebrated graduate of the Rising Sun Detective Bureau's Correspondence School of Detecting. Not a kitchen had needed papering for over a week; green mold gathered on the top of the paste in his barrel, and so slack was the detective business that if Mr. Gubb had not taken out his set of eight varieties of false whiskers daily and brushed them carefully, the moths would have been able to

devour them at leisure. But P. Gubb was not downcast. The let-up in the paper-hanging and detecting lines gave him long and undisturbed days in which to re-read the Course of Twelve Lessons in Detecting, and he was making the most of the opportunity. When he had read the morning paper and eaten his frugal breakfast, nothing was apt to disturb his conscientious study of the Twelve Lessons until his stomach reminded him it was time for luncheon.

P. Gubb opened the *Eagle*. The first words that met his eye caused him to sit upright on his cot. At the top of the first column of the first page were the headlines.

## MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF HENRY SMITZ

Body Found—In Mississippi River By  
Boatman Early This A. M.

## FOUL PLAY SUSPECTED

Mr. Gubb unfolded the paper and read the item under the headlines with the most intense interest. Foul play meant the possibility of an opportunity to put to use once more the precepts of the Course of Twelve Lessons, and with them fresh in his mind, Detective Gubb was eager to undertake the solution of any mystery that Riverbank could fur-

nish. This was the article—short because received just as the paper was going to press:

Just as we go to press we receive word through Policeman Michael O'Toole that the well-known mussel-dredger and boatman, Samuel Fliggis (Long Sam), while dredging for mussels last night just below the bridge, recovered the body of Henry Smitz, late of this place.

Although too late to secure particulars, our reporter learned that Mr. Smitz had been missing for three days and his wife had been greatly worried. Mr. Brownson, of the Brownson Packing Company, by whom he was employed, admitted that Mr. Smitz had been missing for several days.

The body was found sewed in a sack. Foul play is suspected.

"I should think to some extent foul play would be suspected," exclaimed Philo Gubb as he stared at the paper. "If the editorial persons onto the *Eagle* had the advantages of a detective education, they would almost surely think foul play was into a case where a man was sewed into a bag and deposited into the Mississippi River until dead."

He propped the paper against the foot of the cot bed and, reaching his long arm to his desk, picked up the twelve thin pamphlets that constitute the Rising Sun Correspondence School course. From these he selected two—"Mysterious Disappearances" and "Murder Mysteries,"—and, as a preliminary to solving the mystery of H. Smitz, read the two pamphlets carefully. He was still reading them when some one knocked on his door. He wrapped his bath-robe carefully about him and opened the door. A young woman with tear-dimmed eyes stood in the doorway.

"Mr. P. Gubb?" she asked. "I'm sorry to disturb you so early in the morning, Mr. Gubb, but I couldn't sleep all night. I came on a matter—"

"Yes, ma'am," said P. Gubb kindly, for the poor woman was obliged to stop to wipe her eyes.

"I come on a matter of business, as you might say," she continued. "There's a couple of things I want you to do."

"Paper-hanging or detectkating?" asked P. Gubb.

"Both," said the young woman. "My

name is Smitz—Emily Smitz. My husband—"

"I'm aware of the knowledge of your loss, ma'am," said the paper-hanger-detective gently.

"Lots of people know of it," said Mrs. Smitz. "I guess everybody knows of it—I told the police to try to find Henry, so it is no secret. And I want you to come up as soon as you get dressed, and paper my bedroom."

Mr. Gubb looked at the young woman as if he thought she had gone insane under the burden of her woe.

"And then I want you to help to find Henry," she said, "because I've heard you can do so well in the detecting line as anybody in town, or better."

Mr. Gubb suddenly realized that the poor creature did not yet know the full extent of her loss. He gazed down upon her with pity in his bird-like eyes.

"I know you'll think it strange," the young woman went on, "that I should ask you to paper a bedroom first, when my husband is no one knows where; but if he is gone it is because I was a mean, stubborn thing. We never quarreled in our lives, Mr. Gubb, until I picked out the wall-paper for our bedroom, and Henry said parrots and birds-of-paradise and tropical flowers that were as big as umbrellas would look awful on our bedroom wall. So I said he hadn't anything but Low Dutch taste, and he got mad. 'All right, have it your own way,' he said, and I went and had Mr. Skaggs put the paper on the wall, and the next day Henry didn't come home at all.

"If I'd thought Henry would take it that way I'd rather had the wall bare, Mr. Gubb. I've cried and cried about us quarreling over a mean little thing like that, and last night I made up my mind it was all my fault and that when Henry came home he'd find a decent paper on the wall. I don't mind telling you, Mr. Gubb, that when the paper was on the wall it looked worse than it looked in the roll. It looked crazy."

"Yes'm," said Mr. Gubb, "it often does. But, however, there's something you'd ought to know right away about Henry. If I had my garments onto me I'd tell you myself, but I aint dressed enough to do so. If I was you I'd go



somewhere where you could faint if you felt so minded, and—"

The young woman stared wide-eyed at Mr. Gubb for a moment; she turned as white as her shirt-waist.

"Henry is dead!" she cried, and she collapsed into Mr. Gubb's long, thin arms.

Mr. Gubb stood in his doorway, the inert form of the young woman in his arms, and glanced around with a startled gaze. Scantly clad as he was, he did not dare drag the fainting woman into his office; clad only in his night-robe and bath-robe he did not dare carry her to the street. He stood miserably, not knowing what to do, when suddenly he heard feet mounting the brass-clad steps that led up from the street. In less than a minute he saw Policeman O'Toole coming toward him down the hall, and Policeman O'Toole was leading by the arm a man whose wrists bore clanking handcuffs. Policeman O'Toole led his prisoner directly to Philo Gubb's door.

"What's this now?" asked the policeman none too gently, as he saw the bath-robed Mr. Gubb holding the fainting woman in his arms.

"I am exceedingly glad you have come," said Mr. Gubb, "particularly at this moment of time. I am not dressed up to receive the arrival of ladies, especially fainted ones."

"What's the meanin' of this now?" asked O'Toole again.

"The only meaning into it," said Mr. Gubb haughtily, "is that this is Mrs. H.

Smitz, widow-lady, who called upon me on a matter of deteckating and paper-hanging shortly since, and fainted onto me against my will and wishes, and if you mean to think evil and will hold her for me, I'll assault and batter you until you know better."

"I was only askin'," said Policeman O'Toole politely enough.

"You shouldn't ask such things until you're asked to ask," said Mr. Gubb, "and if you've asked all you've got to ask, I'll ask you to kindly hold the lady until I get into my pants, et cetera and so forth."

O'Toole looked at his prisoner.

"I can't hold them both," he said.

"I can perform my dressing better with the prisoner person into my charge than with the lady," suggested Mr. Gubb, and, after looking into Mr. Gubb's room to see that there was no easy means of escape, O'Toole pushed his prisoner into the room and took the limp form of Mrs. Smitz from Mr. Gubb, who entered the room and closed the door.

"I may as well say what I want to say right now," said the handcuffed man. "I've heard of Detective Gubb, off and on, many a time, and as soon as I got into this trouble I

said, 'Gubb's the man that can get me out if anyone can.' My name is Herman Wiggins."

"Glad to meet you," said Mr. Gubb, slipping his long legs into his trousers.

"And I give you my word for what it is worth," continued Mr. Wiggins, "that



He had decided that the most appropriate disguise would be "Number 15."

I'm as innocent of this crime as the babe unborn."

"What crime?" asked Mr. Gubb.

"Why, killing Hen Smitz—what crime did you think?" said Mr. Wiggins. "Do I look like a man that would go and murder a man just because—"

He hesitated, and Mr. Gubb, who was slipping his suspenders over his bony shoulders, looked at Mr. Wiggins with keen eyes.

"Well, just because him and me had words in fun," said Mr. Wiggins. "I leave it to you, can't a man say words in fun once in a while?"

"Certainly sure," said Mr. Gubb.

"Of course he can," said Mr. Wiggins. "I'll bet there's been lots of times when you—just fooling—have said, 'Now, just for that I'll cut your heart out,' or something like that. Just fooling; you know."

"I can't recall such an occasion of time at the present moment," said P. Gubb, "but perhaps that was probably because I don't speak that way as a general rule."

"I guess so," said Mr. Wiggins. "Anybody'd know a man don't mean all he says. Anybody but a fool policeman would. When I went and told Hen Smitz I'd murder him as sure as green apples grow on a tree, I was just fooling. Anybody'd ought to know that. Hen knew it. You can go and ask Hen—no, you can't! He's dead. But you could ask him, if he wasn't dead. But this fool policeman—"

"Mr. O'Toole?"

"Yes. They gave him this Hen Smitz case to look into, and the first thing he did was to arrest me for murder. Nervy, I call it."

Policeman O'Toole opened the door a crack and peeked in. Seeing Mr. Gubb well along in his dressing operations, he opened the door wider and assisted Mrs. Smitz to a chair. She was still limp and frightfully overcome by the recent knowledge of her husband's death—the particulars of which the policeman had just given her—but she was a brave little woman at heart and was trying to control her sobs.

"Through?" O'Toole asked Wiggins. "If you are, come along back to jail."

"Now don't talk to me in that tone of voice," said Mr. Wiggins angrily. "No, I'm not through, but if you are going to talk that way I'll get through and get back to jail and be rid of you. You don't know how to treat a gentleman like a gentleman, and never did."

He turned to Mr. Gubb.

"The long and short of it is this: I'm arrested for the murder of Hen Smitz, and I didn't murder him, and I want you to take my case and look up the clues, and snoop around, and find out who did murder him, and get me out of jail."

"Ah, stuff!" exclaimed O'Toole. "You murdered him and you know you did. What's the use talkin'?"

Mrs. Smitz leaned forward in her chair.

"Murdered Henry?" she cried. "He never murdered Henry. I murdered him."

"Now, ma'am," said O'Toole politely, "I hate to contradict a lady, but you never murdered him at all. This man here murdered him, and I've got the proof on him."

"I murdered him!" cried Mrs. Smitz again. "I did it. I drove him from home. I drove him out of his right mind and made him kill himself."

"It's kind of you to say that," said Mr. Wiggins, "but I've got to say it aint so ma'am. It will relieve your mind to know that anything you did—any little family quarrel or anything—had nothing to do with it. Hen was murdered, all right, but I didn't do it. Somebody else did it."

"I killed him," wailed Mrs. Smitz. "I drove him to suicide."

"Nothing of the sort," declared O'Toole. "This man Wiggins murdered him."

"I did not!" exclaimed Mr. Wiggins indignantly. "He was murdered, but some other man did it."

It seemed a deadlock, for each was quite positive. Mr. Gubb looked from one to the other doubtfully.

"All right, take me back to jail," said Mr. Wiggins. "You look up the case, Mr. Gubb; that's all I came here for. Will you do it? Dig into it, hey?"

"I most certainly shall be glad to so

do," said Mr. Gubb, "at the regular terms."

"I've got some money in the bank," said Mr. Wiggins proudly. "You come to jail after awhile and we can have a nice quiet talk. I want you to find that murderer."

"And I, for one, will be glad to have you work on the case," said O'Toole. "for you'll find nothin' but what will prove this Wiggins murdered Smitz. I tell you that now." And with that he led his prisoner away.

For a few minutes Mrs. Smitz sat silent, her hands clasped, staring at the floor. Then she looked up into Mr. Gubb's eyes.

"You will work on this case, Mr. Gubb, wont you?" she begged. "I have a little money—I'll give it all to have you do your best. It is cruel—cruel to have that poor man suffer under the charge of murder when I know so well Henry killed himself because I was cross with him. You can prove he killed himself—that it was my fault. You will?"

"The way the deteckative profession operates onto a case," said Mr. Gubb, "isn't to go to work to prove anything particularly especial. It finds a clue or clues and follows them to where they lead to. That I shall be willing to do."

"That is all I could ask," said Mrs. Smitz gratefully. Arising from her seat with difficulty, she walked tremblingly to the door. Mr. Gubb assisted her down the stairs, and it was not until she was gone that he remembered that she did not know the body of her husband had been found—sewed in a sack and at the bottom of the river. Young husbands have been known to quarrel with their wives over matters as trivial as bedroom wall-paper; they have even been known to leave home for several days at a time when angry; in extreme cases they have even been known to seek death at their own hands; but it is not at all usual for a young husband to leave home for several days and then in cold blood sew himself in a sack and jump into the river. In the first place there are easier ways of terminating one's life; in the second place a man can jump into the river with perfect ease without going to

the trouble of sewing himself in a sack; and in the third place it is exceedingly difficult for a man to sew himself into a sack. It is almost impossible.

To sew himself into a sack a man must have no little skill, and he must have a large, roomy sack. He takes, let us say, a sack needle threaded with a good length of twine; he steps into the sack and pulls it up over his head; he then reaches above his head, holding the mouth of the sack together with one hand while he sews with the other hand. In hot anger this would be quite impossible.

Philo Gubb thought of all this as he looked through his disguises, selecting one suitable for the work he had in hand. He had just decided that the most appropriate disguise would be "Number 13, Undertaker" and had picked up the close black wig, and long, drooping mustache, when he had another thought. Given a bag sufficiently loose to permit free motion of the hands and arms, and a man, even in hot anger, might sew himself in. A man, intent on suicidally bagging himself, would sew the mouth of the bag shut and would then cut a slit in the front of the bag large enough to crawl into. He would then crawl into the bag and sew up the slit, which would be immediately in front of his hands. It could be done! Philo Gubb chose from his wardrobe a black frock coat and a silk hat with wide band of crepe. He carefully locked his door and went down to the street.

On a day as hot as this day promised to be, a frock coat and a silk hat could be nothing but distressingly uncomfortable. Between his door and the corner, eight various citizens spoke to Philo Gubb, calling him by name. In fact, Riverbank was as accustomed to seeing P. Gubb in disguise as out of disguise, and while a few children might be interested by the sight of Detective Gubb in disguise, the older citizens thought no more of it, as a rule, than of seeing Banker Jennings appear in a pink shirt one day and a blue striped one the next. No one ever accused Banker Jennings of trying to hide his identity by a change of shirts, and no one imagined that P. Gubb was trying to disguise himself

when he put on a disguise. They considered it a mere business custom, just as a butcher tied on a white apron before he went behind his counter.

This was why, instead of wondering who the tall, dark-garbed stranger might be, Banker Jennings greeted Philo Gubb cheerfully.

"Ah, Gubb!" he said. "So you are going to work on this Smitz case, are you? Glad of it, and wish you luck. Hope you place the crime on the right man and get him the full penalty. Let me tell you there's nothing in this rumor of Smitz being short of money. We did lend him money, but we never pressed

Wiggins or some of his crew, understand? Don't say I said a word,—I don't want to be brought into this,—but Smitz was afraid of Wiggins and his crew. He told me so. He said Wiggins had threatened to murder him."

"Mr. Wiggins is at present in the custody of the county jail for killing H. Smitz with intent to murder him," said Mr. Gubb.

"Oh then—then it's all settled," said the banker. "They've proved it on him. I thought they would. Well, I suppose you've got to do your little bit of detecting just the same. Got to air the camphor out of the false hair, eh?"



He was followed by a large and growing group intent on watching a detective detect.

him for it. We never even asked him for interest. I told him a dozen times he could have as much more from us as he wanted, within reason, whenever he wanted it, and that he could pay me when his invention was on the market."

"No report of news of any such rumor has as yet come to my hearing," said P. Gubb, "but since you mention it, I'll take it for less than it is worth."

"And that's less than nothing," said the banker. "Have you any clue?"

"I'm on my way to find one at the present moment of time," said Mr. Gubb.

"Well, let me give you a pointer," said the banker. "Get a line on Herman

The banker waved a cheerful hand at P. Gubb and passed into his banking institution.

Detective Gubb, cordially greeted by his many friends and admirers, passed on down the main street, and by the time he reached the street that led to the river he was followed by a large and growing group intent on the pleasant occupation of watching a detective detect.

As Mr. Gubb walked toward the river, other citizens joined the group, but all kept a respectful distance behind him. When Mr. Gubb reached River Street and his false mustache fell off, the interest of the audience stopped

short three paces behind him and stood until he had rescued the mustache and once more placed its wires in his nostrils. Then, when he moved forward again, they too moved forward. Never, perhaps, in the history of crime was a detective favored with a more respectful gallery.

On the edge of the river, Mr. Gubb found Long Sam Fliggis, the mussel dredger, seated on an empty tar-barrel with his own audience ranged before him listening while he told, for the fortieth time, the story of his finding of the body of H. Smitz. As Philo Gubb approached, Long Sam ceased speaking, and his audience and Mr. Gubb's gallery merged into one great circle which respectfully looked and listened while Mr. Gubb questioned the mussel dredger.

"Suicide?" said Long Sam scoffingly. "Why, he warn't no more a suicide than I am right now. He was murdered or warn't nothin'! I've dredged up some suicides in my day, and some of 'em had stones tied to 'em, to make sure they'd sink, and some thought they'd sink without no ballast, but nary one of 'em ever sewed himself into a bag, and I give my word," he said positively, "that Hen Smitz couldn't have sewed himself into that burlap bag unless some one done the sewing. Then the feller that did it was an assistant-suicide, and the way I look at it is that an assistant-suicide is jest the same as a murderer."

The crowd murmured approval, but Mr. Gubb held up his hand for silence.

"In certain kinds of burlap bags it is possibly probable a man could sew himself into it," said Mr. Gubb, and the crowd, seeing the logic of the remark, applauded gently but feelingly.

"You aint seen the way he was sewed up," said Long Sam, "or you wouldn't talk like that."

"I haven't yet took a look," admitted Mr. Gubb, "but I aim so to do immediately after I find a clue onto which to work up my case. An A-1 deteckative can't set forth to work until he has a clue, that being a rule of the game."

"What kind of a clue was you lookin' for?" asked Long Sam. "What's a clue, anyway?"

"A clue," said P. Gubb, "is almost

anything connected with the late lamented, but generally something that nobody but a detective would think had anything to do with anything whatsoever. Not infrequently often it is a button."

"Well, I've got no button except them that is sewed onto me," said Long Sam, "but if this here sack-needle will do any good—"

He brought from his pocket the point of a heavy sack-needle and laid it in Philo Gubb's palm. Mr. Gubb looked at it carefully. In the eye of the needle still remained a few inches of twine.

"I cut that off'n the burlap he was sewed up in," volunteered Long Sam. "I thought I'd keep it as a sort of nice little souvenir. I'd like it back again when you don't need it for a clue no more."

"Certainly sure," agreed Mr. Gubb, and he examined the needle carefully. There are two kinds of sack-needles in general use. In both, the point of the needle is curved to facilitate pushing it into and out of a closely filled sack; in both, the curved portion is somewhat flattened so that the thumb and finger may secure a firm grasp to pull the needle through; but in one style the eye is at the end of the shaft while in the other it is near the point. This needle was like neither; the eye was midway of the shaft; the needle was pointed at each end and the curved portions were not flattened. Mr. Gubb noticed another thing—the twine was not the ordinary loosely-twisted hemp twine, but a hard, smooth cotton cord, like carpet warp.

"Thank you," said Mr. Gubb; "and now I will go elsewhere to investigate to a further extent, and it is not necessarily imperative that everybody should accompany along with me if they don't want to."

But everybody did want to, it seemed. Long Sam and his audience joined Mr. Gubb's gallery and, with a dozen or so newcomers, they followed Mr. Gubb at a decent distance as he walked toward the plant of the Brownson Packing Company, which stood on the river bank some two blocks away.

It was here Henry Smitz had worked. Six or eight buildings of various sizes, the largest of which stood immediately



on the river's edge, together with the "yards" or pens, all enclosed by a high board fence, constituted the plant of the packing company, and as Mr. Gubb appeared at the gate the watchman there stood aside to let him enter.

"Good morning, Mr. Gubb," he said pleasantly. "I been sort of expecting you. Always right on the job when there's crime being done, aint you? You'll find Merkel and Brill and Jokosky and the rest of Wiggins' crew in the main building, and I guess they'll tell you just what they told the police. They hate it, but what else can they say? It's the truth."

"What is the truth?" asked Mr. Gubb.

"That Wiggins was dead sore at Hen Smitz," said the watchman. "That Wiggins told Hen he'd do for him if he lost them their jobs like he said he would. That's the truth."

Mr. Gubb—his admiring followers were halted at the gate by the watchman—entered the large building and inquired his way to Mr. Wiggins' department. He found it on the side of the building toward the river and on the ground floor. On one side the vast room led into the refrigerating room of the company; on the other it opened upon a long but narrow dock that ran the width of the building.

Along the outer edge of the dock were tied two barges, and into these barges some of Wiggins' crew were dumping mutton—not legs of mutton but entire sheep, neatly sewed in burlap. The large room was the packing and shipping room, and the work of Wiggins' crew was that of sewing the slaughtered and refrigerated sheep carcasses in burlap for shipment. Bales of burlap stood against one wall; strands of hemp twine ready for the needle hung from pegs in the wall and the posts that supported the floor above. The contiguity of the refrigerating room gave the room a pleasantly cool atmosphere.

Mr. Gubb glanced sharply around. Here was the burlap, here were needles, here was twine. Yonder was the river into which Hen Smitz had been thrown. He glanced across the narrow dock at the blue river. As his eye returned he

noticed one of the men carefully sweeping the dock with a broom—sweeping fragments of glass into the river. As the men in the room watched him curiously, Mr. Gubb picked up a piece of burlap and put it in his pocket, wrapped a strand of twine around his finger and pocketed the twine, examined the needles stuck in improvised needle-holders made by boring gimlet holes in the wall, and then walked to the dock and picked up one of the pieces of glass.

"Clues," he remarked, and gave his attention to the work of questioning the men.

Although manifestly reluctant, they frankly admitted that Wiggins had more than once threatened Hen Smitz—that he hated Hen Smitz with the hatred of a man who has been threatened with the loss of his job. Mr. Gubb learned that Hen Smitz had been the foreman for the entire building—a sort of autocrat with, as Wiggins' crew informed him, an easy job. He had only to see that the crews in the building turned out more work this year than they did last year. "'Ficiency" had been his motto, they said, and they hated "'Ficiency."

Mr. Gubb's gallery was awaiting him at the gate, and its members were in a heated discussion as to what Mr. Gubb had been doing. They ceased at once when he appeared and fell in behind him as he walked away from the packing house and toward the undertaking establishment of Mr. Holworthy Bartman, on the main street. Here, joining the curious group already assembled, the gallery was forced to wait while Mr. Gubb entered. His task was an unpleasant but necessary one. He must visit the little "morgue" at the back of Mr. Bartman's establishment.

The body of poor Hen Smitz had not yet been removed from the bag in which it had been found, and it was to the bag Mr. Gubb gave his closest attention. The bag—in order that the body might be identified—had not been ripped, but had been cut, and not a stitch had been severed. It did not take Mr. Gubb a moment to see that Hen Smitz had not been sewed in a bag at all. He had been sewed in burlap—burlap "yard goods," to use a shop-keeper's term—and it was



burlap identical with that used by Mr. Wiggins and his crew. It was no loose bag of burlap—but a close-fitting wrapping of burlap; a cocoon of burlap that had been drawn tight around the body, as burlap is drawn tight around the carcass of sheep for shipment.

It would have been utterly impossible for Hen Smitz to have sewed himself into the casing, not only because it bound his arms tight to his sides but because the burlap was lapped over and sewed from the outside. This, once and for all, ended the suicide theory. The question was: Who was the murderer?

As Philo Gubb turned away from the bier, Undertaker Bartman entered the morgue.

"The crowd outside is getting impatient, Mr. Gubb," he said in his soft, undertakery voice. "It is getting on toward their lunch hour, and they want to crowd into my front office to find out what you've learned. I'm afraid they'll break my plate glass windows, they're pushing so hard against them. I don't want to hurry you, but if you would go out and tell them Wiggins is the murderer they'll go away. Of course there's no doubt about Wiggins' being the murderer, since he has admitted he asked the stock-keeper for the electric light bulb."

"What bulb?" asked Philo Gubb.

"The electric light bulb we found sewed inside this burlap when we sliced it open," said Bartman. "Matter of fact, we found it in Hen's hand. O'Toole took it for a clue and I guess it fixes the murder on Wiggins beyond all doubt. The stock-keeper says Wiggins got it from him."

"And what does Wiggins remark on that subject?" asked Mr. Gubb.

"Not a word," said Bartman. "His lawyer told him not to open his mouth, and he wont. Listen to that crowd out there!"

"I will attend to that crowd right presently," said P. Gubb sternly. "What I should wish to know now is why Mister Wiggins went and sewed an electric light bulb in with the corpse for."

"In the first place," said Mr. Bartman, "he didn't sew it in with any corpse, because Hen Smitz wasn't a

corpse when he was sewed in that burlap, unless Wiggins drowned him first, for Dr. Norberg says Hen Smitz dies of drowning; and in the second place, if you had a live man to sew in burlap, and had to hold him while you sewed him, you'd be liable to sew anything in with him.

"My idea is that Wiggins and some of his crew jumped on Hen Smitz and threw him down, and some of them held him while the others sewed him in. My idea is that Wiggins got that electric light bulb to replace one that had burned out, and that he met Hen Smitz and had words with him, and they clinched, and Hen Smitz grabbed the bulb, and then the others came, and they sewed him into the burlap and dumped him into the river.

"So all you've got to do is to go out and tell that crowd that Wiggins did it and that you'll let them know who helped him as soon as you find out. And you better do it before they break my windows."

Detective Gubb turned and went out of the morgue. As he left the undertaker's establishment the crowd gave a slight cheer, but Mr. Gubb walked hurriedly toward the jail. He found Policeman O'Toole there and questioned him about the bulb; and O'Toole, proud to be the center of so large and interested a gathering of his fellow citizens, pulled the bulb from his pocket and handed it to Mr. Gubb, while he repeated in more detail the facts given by Mr. Bartman. Mr. Gubb looked at the bulb.

"I presume to suppose," he said, "that Mr. Wiggins asked the stock-keeper for a new bulb to replace one that was burned out?"

"You're right," said O'Toole. "Why?"

"For the reason that this bulb is a burned-out bulb," said Mr. Gubb, and so it was. The inner surface of the bulb was darkened slightly, and the filament of carbon was severed. O'Toole took the bulb and examined it curiously.

"That's odd, aint it?" he said.

"It might so seem to the non-detectative mind," said Mr. Gubb, "but to the detectative mind, nothing is odd."

"No, no, this aint so odd, either," said O'Toole, "for whether Hen Smitz

grabbed the bulb before Wiggins changed the new one for the old one, or after he changed it, don't make so much difference, when you come to think of it."

"To the detectakive mind," said Mr. Gubb, "it makes the difference that this aint the bulb you thought it was and hence consequently it aint the bulb Mister Wiggins got from the stock-keeper."



shirted laboring man with a long brown beard. Then he led the way back to the packing house.

Again the crowd was halted at the gate, but again P. Gubb passed inside, and he found the stock-keeper eating his luncheon out of a tin pail. The stock-keeper was perfectly willing to talk.

"It was like this," said the stock-keeper: "We've been working overtime in some departments down here, and Wiggins and his crew had to work overtime the night Hen Smitz was murdered. Hen and Wiggins was at outs, or anyway I heard Hen tell Wiggins he'd better be hunting another job, because he wouldn't have this one long, and Wiggins told Hen that if he lost his job he'd murder him—Wiggins would murder Hen, that is. I didn't think it was much of anything but loose talk, at the time. But Hen was working overtime too. He'd been working nights up in that little room of his on the second floor for quite some time, and this night Wiggins come to me and he says Hen had asked him for a fresh thirty-two-candlepower bulb. So I give it to Wiggins, and then I went home. And, come to find out, Wiggins sewed that bulb up with Hen."

"Perhaps maybe you have sack-needles like this into your stock-room," said

P. Gubb, producing the needle Long Sam had given him. The stock-keeper took the needle and examined it carefully.

"Never had any like that," he said.

"Now if," said Philo Gubb, "—if the bulb that was sewed up into the burlap with Henry Smitz wasn't a new bulb, and if Mr. Wiggins had given the new bulb to Henry, and if Henry had changed the new bulb for an old one, where would he have changed it at?"

"Up in his room, where he was always tinkering at that machine of his," said the stock-keeper.

"Could I have the pleasure of taking a look into that there room for a moment of time?" asked Mr. Gubb.

The stock-keeper arose, returned the remnants of his luncheon to his dinner-pail, and led the way up the stairs. He opened the door of the room Henry Smitz had used as a work-room, and P. Gubb walked in. The room was in some confusion but, except in one or two particulars, no more than a work-room is apt to be. A rather cumbrous machine—the invention on which Henry Smitz had been working—stood as the murdered man had left it, all its levers, wheels, arms and cogs intact. A chair, tipped over, lay on the floor. A roll of burlap stood on a roller by the machine. Looking up, Mr. Gubb saw, on the ceiling, the lighting fixture of the room, and in it was a clean, shining thirty-two-candlepower bulb. Where another similar bulb might have been in the other socket was a plug from which an insulated wire, evidently to furnish power, ran to the small motor connected with the machine on which Henry Smitz had been working.

The stock-keeper was the first to speak.

"Hello!" he said. "Somebody broke that window!" And it was true. Somebody had not only broken the window but had broken every pane out of the sash itself. But Mr. Gubb was not interested in this. He was gazing at the electric bulb and thinking of Part 2, Lesson VI of the Course of Twelve Lessons—"How to Identify by Fingerprints, with General Remarks on the Bertillon System." He looked about for

some means of reaching the bulb above his head. His eye lit on the fallen chair. By placing the chair upright and placing one foot on the frame of Henry Smitz' machine and the other on the chair-back, he could reach the bulb. He righted the chair and stepped onto its seat. He put one foot on the frame of Henry Smitz' machine; very carefully he put the other foot on the top of the chair-back. He reached upward and unscrewed the bulb.

The stock-keeper saw the chair totter. He sprang forward to steady it, but he was too late. Philo Gubb, grasping the air, fell on the broad, level board that formed the middle part of Henry Smitz' machine.

The effect was instantaneous. The cogs and wheels of the machine began to revolve rapidly. Two strong, steel arms flopped down and held Detective Gubb to the table, clamping his arms to his side. The roll of burlap unrolled, and as it unrolled, the loose end was seized and slipped under Mr. Gubb and wrapped around him and drawn taut, bundling him as a sheep's carcass is bundled. An arm reached down and back and forth, with a sewing motion, and passed from Mr. Gubb's head to his feet. As it reached his feet a knife sliced the burlap in which he was wrapped from the burlap on the roll.

And then a most surprising thing hap-

pened. As if the board on which he lay had been a catapult, it suddenly and unexpectedly raised Philo Gubb and tossed him through the open window. The stock-keeper heard a muffled scream and then a great splash, but when he ran to the window, the great paper-hanger detective had disappeared in the bosom of the Mississippi.

Like Henry Smitz he had tried to reach the ceiling by standing on the chair-back; like Henry Smitz he had fallen upon the newly-invented burlap-ing and loading machine; like Henry Smitz he had been wrapped and thrown through the window into the river; but, unlike Henry Smitz, he had not been sewn into the burlap, because Philo Gubb had the double-pointed shuttle-action needle in his pocket.

Page 17 of Lesson XI of the Rising Sun Detective Bureau's Correspondence School of Detecting's Course of Twelve Lessons, says:

In cases of extreme difficulty of solution it is well for the detective to re-enact as nearly as possible the probable action of the crime.

Mr. Philo Gubb had done so. He had also proved that a man may be sewn in a sack and drowned in a river without even committing suicide or being the victim of foul play.

Of course, this was "some" mystery, but wait till you read the story of "THE TOGBURY JOOL," the next exploit of Philo Gubb, in the May issue of The Red Book Magazine, on the news-stands April twenty-third. There's a mystery that demands every disguise in Mr. Gubb's repertory!

# The Same Cloth

A STORY OF  
TWO SISTERS

**T**HE door of the darkened front room was opened softly. A lean, rather oldish man in an ill-fitting frock coat of rusty black tip-toed into the kitchen, where Rena Burch and Will Thomas were arranging the folding chairs in stiff rows.

"Wouldn't you like to step in a minute and see her before the folks begin to come?" the man in the frock coat suggested with a certain stereotyped quality in his tones that made one sure it was all a part of an old, old routine with him. "She looks jest as if she was asleep," he added, in the same droning voice.

Rena, dabbing her red eyes with her handkerchief, made her way to the door of that front room. Will Thomas, having straightened the last row of chairs methodically, followed her. The lean man opened the door and stood back with solemn obsequiousness.

"It's awful dark," Rena choked in a half-whisper. "She never liked the dark."

The dry little man stepped to one of the two little windows and lifted the down-drawn shade a fraction of an inch. The hazy, mellow sunshine of Indian summer came filtering through the crevice thus made. It lay warmly on the worn old thread-bare carpet and on one corner of the old book-case of black walnut with the pink shells on top of it. It gave enough light for them to see the thin, drawn face in the cheap casket, and its crown of wavy brown hair, already graying at the temples.



Rena knew they spoke of Emily. She paused.

Rena stepped close to the casket and covered her pretty, rather hard little face with her two slim hands. She began to sob noisily. The lean man stood solemnly and stolidly by, evidently quite used to, and more or less bored by, such displays of emotion. Will Thomas, standing beside Rena, looked extremely uncomfortable. He shifted his weight continually, first to one foot, then to the other, quite unmindful that each move on his part set the loose floor boards to creaking overloudly in the still room.

"Em'ly!" Rena was sobbing brokenly. "Oh, Em'ly! Em'ly!"

Will Thomas cleared his throat. Words of comfort seemed obviously in order, but somehow he could not seem to get hold of the right ones, strive for them as he would. So he shifted his weight from foot to foot rather more painfully, and the floor boards sent out a still more strident squeaking.



all a-flutter in the darkness, to listen.

By John  
Barton  
Oxford

Author of "Wages," etc

ILLUSTRATED BY  
GRANT T. REYNARD

in the kitchen came drifting in to them with unusual loudness. Will Thomas moved a step closer to Rena.

"They don't make any better than what your sister Em'ly was," said he with conviction.

The choking sobs suddenly began again, but one of Rena's little hands groped for the man's big hand, found it, and clung to it with a grip almost fiercely tender.

"Oh, Em'ly!" she murmured brokenly.

The lean man stood impatiently by the window. To his mind there was far too much light in the room—a positively indecent amount of

light. He was only waiting for these two to leave the room before he lowered the shade, as to his mind it should be lowered.

At last he touched Rena on the arm. It was a clumsy, tentative caress. He cleared his throat again, more loudly this time.

"You couldn't wish her back, Rena," he said with an effort. "You couldn't want her to go through all her suff'rin' again. She's better off like she is."

"I know," said the girl, "I know. I aint wishin' her back. I was thinkin' of somethin' she told me day before yesterday—just before she died. Oh, let's have a little more light. She always liked the sunlight in the house so."

The lean, solemn man moved to the window and put the shade up another tiny fraction of an inch. His forbidding expression seemed to say all this was quite contrary to custom and that he did it only under pressure.

The girl's sobs had ceased. She stood looking down musingly at that white, still face. The ticking of the wall clock

WHEN Emily Burch had been brought home from the spool mill where she worked, when the doctor had been summoned and had thumped and pounded and had shaken his head and gone his way, and the news had leaked out that Emily was what we term in our village "real bad off," there were plenty of busy tongues to declare they had always known Rena Burch's "doings" would kill Emily eventually.

The Burch girls had been left quite alone in the world when Rena was fourteen and Emily just turned twenty. Emily was frail looking, tired of eyes, always seemingly fagged out. Long before she should have been out of school she was at work in the spool mills, help-

ing out the tottering family finances. Then her father and her mother had died within the year, and Emily found herself facing the problem of earning enough to support herself and Rena, and paying the interest on the mortgage on the place her father had (nominally) owned, that they might have a roof over their heads.

Emily had quiet, steady gray eyes, even if they were tired looking, an overweening fondness for Rena, and a determination that Rena should never work as she had done. Perhaps therein lay her greatest weakness. For she kept Rena in school long after Rena was quite able to do her share towards their mutual support, and, moreover, she saw to it that Rena had as many pretty clothes as Emily's pinching and saving and cutting corners could buy.

But Emily's real troubles began when Rena put on long skirts; and Rena, developed far beyond her years, put them on precociously young. With tears and stampings of her tiny feet she insisted upon it; and tears and stampings always had their effect on Emily. That Rena should not be unhappy was her chief aim in life. Towards it she bent her every effort.

It was open gossip in the village that Emily had spoiled her younger sister; that she gave in altogether too much to Rena's willfulness; that she was altogether too much afraid of hurting Rena's feelings.

Certain it is that Rena grew up a raving little beauty, and that, as she grew up, Emily's eyes became more tired and the lines about her wide mouth deeper.

Rena's name began to be bandied about rather too much; nor were all the gossipings about her without grounds.

Rena finally went to work in the spool mills herself, and once she was earning her own money, Emily's quiet advice went for naught with her.

Emily was worried. She had always thought of a pretty girl like her sister growing up and marrying some steady young chap in the village. But Rena was of a different mind and mold. What she earned in the spool mill went for gay clothes; and by and by it began to be

whispered about that not three times the wages she received at the mill would pay for the things she bought. Also it was known that Rena considered the young men of the village a slow lot. Automobiles from certain neighboring and larger towns than ours were seen whisking through the dusk o' evenings, and generally they stopped at the little house on the Cedar Hill Road where Rena and Emily lived. Rest assured it was always Rena who went laughing away through the darkness to certain shady motor inns with the gay young would-be bloods who owned or drove these cars.

At first Emily tried to argue there was no real harm in Rena; that she was just a thoughtless, spoiled child. But when Rena was out every evening, often until the wee, small hours of the morning, when there had been two or three pretty stormy scenes between the sisters at the little house on the Cedar Hill Road, when Rena had plainly told Emily to stop her eternal croaking and mind her own business, Emily was forced to admit that Rena was out of hand and running wild. Nor could anything she could say or do seem to have any effect upon Rena. Did Emily try to reason with her, Rena cut her short with jeers and sneers; did Emily try to upbraid her sister, Rena stayed out later than usual on one of her motor rides.

Emily was disgusted, and angry, and frightened by turns. Rena's name was on far too many tongues; Emily, sitting alone each evening, thought out plan after plan; but each one, when she tried to put it into effect, was just as ineffective as the one before it.

And while she was still trying to formulate some plan for saving Rena before it was too late, she very quietly and without any unnecessary fuss—as was ever Emily's way in all things—toppled over at the spool mill one day and lay in an inert, quivering heap on the floor.

That was the day already mentioned when the doctor came and shook his head, and the wagging tongues began to say that Rena Burch had as surely killed her sister as if she had run a knife into her heart.

Rena, to do her justice, was more





She took one of Emily's thin hands, and smiled down at her.

frightened than she had ever been in her selfish, thoughtless life. Somewhere deep down in her shallow little heart, hidden away under a great pretense of scorn, was a deep and genuine affection for plain, homely Emily.

When she had listened to what the doctor had to say about Emily,—and he did not mince matters at all to Rena in saying it, either,—she saw things plainly for once in her life. It frightened her and gave her a strange, choking sense in her throat. She realized all at once what the strain had meant to Emily—Emily, who had worked at the mill almost as

soon as she had been able to toddle. She realized the worry she had caused her, the many, many lonely evenings Emily must have known. Something of Emily's own gentle firmness took possession of her. She listened quietly to the doctor and then went into the room where Emily lay on the bed. She merely took one of Emily's thin hands in her own round, firm ones and smiled down at her. That was quite enough for Emily.

Rena found a woman to stay with Emily while she herself was at work. Also there were medicines and dainty food for the invalid. Emily did not know, nor did Rena see fit to tell her, that she sold most of her pretty clothes for

what little they would bring, to procure the extra things.

And then one day the doctor told Rena, very gently this time, that Emily at best had but a few weeks to live. Rena did some tall thinking after the doctor had left. Two days later she stole softly into Emily's room. She slipped an arm under the thin, frail body. Into Emily's eager ear she whispered the news that she was engaged to Will Thomas—good, stolid, slow-witted Will Thomas, whom Emily had always hoped she would marry. Emily wept weakly for sheer joy. She felt her cup brimming

over. Those were wonderful days at the little house on the Cedar Hill Road.

A RUSH order to be shipped at once had kept Lena late at the spool mill that November evening. She was nearing the foot of Cedar Hill, when, at the front gate of the little white house she was approaching, she heard voices coming through the still, frosty darkness.

"How'd you find her to-day?" said the first voice, and Rena recognized it for the voice of old Mrs. Babb, who lived in the little white house.

"Failin'," said another voice, also a woman's. "I guess Rena's actions were jest about the last straw. The pore soul! She's had a dreadful hard life of it!"

Rena knew they spoke of Emily. She paused, all a-flutter in the darkness, to listen.

It is an old, old saw that eavesdroppers never hear any good of themselves. Perhaps Rena Burch richly deserved to hear what she had heard as she stood there, quivering first with rage and then with bitter shame, in the muddy road. Perhaps she did not deserve it all; that is beside the point, anyway. The point is that she heard it, and what she had heard sent her up Cedar Hill quivering and ashamed and gasping. She did not realize how the people in the village regarded her. It is only human frailty to consider ourselves known to ourselves alone. That she was such a creature as the two women at the gate of the little white house had pictured her had never crossed Rena's thoughtless mind. But that she really was as they drew her, now flashed upon her like the sudden stab of a keen-bladed knife.

Emily called to her weakly as she came in. Emily always called to her as soon as she heard her footsteps, these days. Somehow Rena staggered into the little bedroom where Emily lay. She fancied her smile hid all her recent wounds, but her gray, drawn face did not escape Emily's keen eyes.

"Rena, what has happened, child?" said she. "Why, you're as pale as a ghost. You look sick."

Rena forgot many things at that moment; she forgot the doctor had said any sudden shock would be a dangerous

matter for Emily. She forgot indeed that Emily was holding to life by a thread. She dropped on her knees by the bed. She caught one of her sister's thin hands in both her own and buried her face in the coverlet.

Breathlessly, brokenly she began telling what she had heard at the gate of the little white house at the foot of the hill. She told it hurriedly, in disjointed fashion, gasping broken sobs now and then between the words.

"And it's true!" she cried as she finished her recital. "I've killed you, Emily. It was what I did that brought you to this. I—I saw myself to-night as I am. I didn't realize it until I heard them talking."

"Hush! Oh, hush!" said Emily, one trembling hand striving to stroke Rena's brown hair. "You're going to marry Will soon. Things will die out. They'll all be forgotten after you marry Will."

"I'm not going to marry him," cried Rena wildly, "not after the things I heard about myself to-night. I'll never marry him—or anyone."

EMILY struggled up on the pillows, her eyes wide and frightened. Death suddenly loomed as something she had never thought of in such a way before—something horrible, wicked, final. Death had not seemed so very terrible a thing when she knew Rena was to be married to Will Thomas soon after she was gone.

Too well she knew Rena's mercurial temperament. With Rena alone and the echoes of those cruel tongues at the foot of the hill ringing in Rena's ears, she trembled to think what might happen. She was breathing hard. An unearthly pallor had come to her cheeks, but her eyes were preternaturally bright, and she was thinking fast.

"Rena, dear heart," said she, "don't pay any attention to them. Let whoever is without sin cast the first stone. We are all alike; we are all cut out of the same cloth. Those two women talking there at the gate to-night—why, there are things about both of them that could be said—ugly, black things, just such as they said about you. They've forgotten they can be said. They always do in these

little places when they're safely and respectably married. We're all out of the same piece of cloth."

"No, we're not," said Rena fiercely. "There are women—women like you, Emily—"

Emily interrupted her with a hollow laugh. She struggled up higher on the pillows until she sat bolt upright. Her eyes grew still brighter, although she was gasping for breath and swaying from side to side.

Only one thing was in her mind; that Rena—pretty, willful, foolish Rena must be left in safe hands, hands like those of stolid, good-hearted, gentle, wise Will Thomas.

"Child, child, you are not the only black sheep in the world," said she. "Why didn't I talk more to you at the last of it when you stayed out so late? Because I—yes, I—well, there were people here I didn't want you to know about or see. We're all of the same cloth, only—only—some—like you, Rena, come out in the open—and—"

The words ended in a gasping cough. Emily Burch slipped back on the pillows, and the first lie she had ever told or tried to tell, was left unfinished. Her

hand still clutched Rena's, and even in death she seemed to be smiling up at her from the pillows.

IN the darkened little front room, where the one faint patch of mellow Indian summer sunlight lay on the threadbare carpet and the corner of the old black walnut book-case with the pink shells on top of it, Rena Burch turned away from the cheap casket.

The lean gentleman in the rusty black frock coat was rather over-anxious to observe the conventions, as his own particular lights showed them to him. For Rena had not crossed the threshold to the kitchen when he began hauling down that offending shade.

Rena turned with a sharp little cry of remonstrance.

"Oh, please," she begged. "She hated the dark so. Don't pull the shade down. Lift it higher, instead!"

Good, stolid Will Thomas had paused for one final look at that calm face. He was still seeking vainly those comforting words as he joined Rena in the kitchen doorway.

"She must have went easy. She looks just as if she was smilin'," said he.

ON THE NEXT PAGE begins the final installment of that wonderfully fine novel, "HEPSEY BURKE." It has won more steadfast friends than any story of its sort since "David Harum." Mr. Westcott has written a short story of Hepsey, which will appear in the May issue of The Red Book Magazine, under the title of "AN EMBARRASSING VISIT." It's a mighty good short story. Don't miss it.



Hepsey turned upon him relentlessly: "Now see here! You know I don't start somethin' unless I can see it through."

THE FINAL INSTALLMENT OF

# HEPSEY BURKE

A NOVEL OF A DAVID HARUM IN PETTICOATS

By Frank N. Westcott

ILLUSTRATED BY FREDERICK R. GRUGER

## CHAPTER XXII

### HEPSEY CALLS A MEETING

**F**OR the next few days Hepsey's mind worked in unfamiliar channels, for her nature was that of a benevolent autocrat, and she had found herself led by circumstances into a situation demanding the prowess and elasticity of the diplomat. To begin with, she must risk a gamble at the meeting: if the spiritual yeast did not rise in old Bascom, as she hoped it would, and crown her strategy with success, she would have to fall back on belligerent tactics, and see if it were not possible to get his duty out of him by threatened force of public opinion: and she knew that, with his obstinacy, it would be touch and go on which side of the fence he would fall in a situation of that kind.

Furthermore, Hepsey concluded that beyond the vaguest hint of her call on Bascom and the object of the meeting, she could not show her hand to Maxwell; for he would feel it his duty to step in and prevent the possibility of any such open breach as failure on Hepsey's part would probably make in the parish solidarity. For once she must keep her own counsel—except for Jonathan, whose present infatuated condition made him an even safer and more satisfactory source of "advice" than he normally was. The evening before the meeting, however, as he sat on Hepsey's porch, he began to experience qualms, perhaps in his capacity as Junior Warden. But Hepsey turned upon him relentlessly:

"Now see here! You know I don't start somethin' unless I can see it through; and if it means a scrap, so much the better. Next to a good revival, a good hard scrap in a stupid parish has a real spiritual value. It stimulates the circulation, increases the appetite, gives people somethin' to think about, and does a lot of good where peaceful ways would fail. The trouble with us is that we've always been a sight too peaceful. If I've got to do it, I'm goin' to make a row, a real jolly row that'll make some people wish they'd never been born. No, no, no! Don't you try to interfere. We've come to a crisis, and I'm goin' to meet it.

"Don't you worry until I begin to holler for first aid to the injured. A woman can't vote for a vestryman, though women form the bulk of the congregation, and do 'most all of the parish work; and the whole church'd go to smithereens if it weren't for the women. But there's one thing a woman can always do: *She can talk*. They say that talk is cheap; but sometimes it's a mighty expensive article, if it's the right kind; and maybe the men will have to settle the bills. I'm going to *talk*: perhaps you think that's nothing new. But you don't know how I can talk when once I get my dander up. Somebody's goin' to sit up and pay attention this time. Bascom'll conclude to preside at the meetin', whichever way he means to act; and I've fixed it so Maxwell will be engaged on other duties. No; go 'way. I don't want to see you around here again until the whole thing's over."

"All right Hepsey, all right. I guess if it goes through the way you want



Hepsey cast a glance of whimsical affection at her palpitating fancé. "I'd best





let him get it off his chest—then we'll get down to business," she laughed.

you'll be that set up you'll be wantin' to marry old Bascom 'stead of me," chuckled Jonathan, as the lady of his choice turned to enter the house.

She faced round upon him as she reached the door, her features set with grim determination:

"If I get the whole caboodle, bag and baggage, from the meetin' and from Bascom, there's no knowin' but what I'll send for the parson and be married right there and then. There isn't a thing I could think of, in the line of a real expensive sacrifice, that'd measure up as compensation for winnin' out—not even marryin' you, Jonathan Jackson."

THE night of the meeting, the Sunday school room, next to the church, was filled full to a seat at least a quarter of an hour before the time announced for the meeting. Hepsey had provided herself with a chair in the center of the front row, directly facing the low platform to be occupied by the chairman. Her leather bag hung formidably on one arm, and a long, narrow blank-book was laid on her lap. She took little notice of her surroundings, and her anxiety was imperceptible, as she thrummed with a pencil upon the book, glancing now and then at the side door, watching for Bascom's entrance. The meeting buzzed light conversation, as a preliminary. Had she miscalculated on the very first move? Was he going to treat the whole affair with lofty disdain? As the hour struck, dead silence reigned in the expectant room; and Jonathan, who sat next her, fidgeted nervously.

"Five minutes' grace, and that's all; if he's not here by then, it'll be up to you to call the meetin' to order," whispered Hepsey.

"Sakes!" hissed the terrified Junior Warden, "you didn't say nothin' about that, Hepsey," he protested.

She leveled a withering glance at him, and was about to reduce him to utter impotence by some scathing remark, when both were startled by a voice in front of them, issuing from "the chair." Silently the Senior Warden had entered, and had proceeded to open the meeting. His face was set and stern, and his voice hard and toneless.

"As the rector of this parish is not able to be present I have been asked to preside at this meeting. I believe that it was instigated—that is, suggested, by some of the ladies who believe that there are some matters of importance which need immediate attention, and must be presented to the congregation without delay. I must beg to remind these ladies that the wardens and vestrymen are the business officers of the church; and it seems to my poor judgment that if any business is to be transacted, the proper way would be for the Vestry to take care of it. However, I have complied with the request and have undertaken to preside, in the absence of the Rector. The meeting is now open for business."

Bascom sat down and gazed at the audience, but with a stare so expressionless as gave no further index to his mood. For some time there was a rather painful silence; but at last Hepsey Burke arose and faced about to command the audience.

"Brethren and sisters," she began, "a few of us women have made up our minds that it's high time that somethin' was done towards payin' our rector what we owe him, and that we furnish him with a proper house to live in."

At this point, a faint murmur of applause interrupted the speaker, who replied: "There, there. Don't be too quick. You won't feel a bit like applaudin' when I get through. It's a burnin' shame and disgrace that we owe Mr. Maxwell about two hundred dollars, which means a mighty lot to him, because if he was paid in full every month he would get just about enough to keep his wife and himself from starvin' to death. I wasn't asked to call this meetin'; I asked the Rector to, and I asked the Senior Warden to preside. And I told the Rector that some of us—both men and women—had business to talk about that wasn't for his ears. For all he knows, we're here to pass a vote of censure on him. The fact is that we have reached the point where somethin' has got to be done right off quick; and if none of the vestrymen do it, then a poor shrinkin' little woman like myself has got to rise and mount the bandwagon. I'm no woman's rights woman,

but I have a conscience that'll keep me awake nights until I have freed my mind."

Here Hepsey paused, and twirling her pencil between her lips, gazed around at her auditors, who were listening with breathless attention. Then she suddenly exclaimed with suppressed wrath, and in her penetrating tones:

"What is the matter with you men, anyway? You'd have to pay your butcher, or your baker, or your grocer, whether you wanted to or not. Then why in the name of conscience don't you pay your parson? Certainly religion that don't cost nothin' is worse than nothin'. I'll tell you the reason why you don't support your parson: It's just because your rector's a gentleman, and can't very well kick over the traces, or balk, or sue you, even if you do starve him. So you prosperous, big-headed men think that you can sneak out of it. Oh, you needn't shuffle and look mad; you're goin' to get the truth for once, and I had Johnny Mullins lock the front door before I began."

The whole audience responded to this sally with a laugh, but the speaker relented not one iota. "Then when you've smit your rector on one cheek, you quote the Bible to make him think he ought to turn his overcoat also." (Another roar.) "There: you don't need to think I'm havin' a game. I'm not through yet. Now let's get right down to business. We owe our rector a lot of money, and he is livin' in a tent because we neglected to pay the interest on the rectory mortgage held by the senior warden of our church. Talkin' plain business, and nothin' else, we turned him out of house and home, and we broke our business contract with him. Yes, we did! And now you know it."

"Some of us have been sayin'—and I was one of 'em till Mr. Maxwell corrected me—that it was mean of Mr. Bascom to turn the Rector and his wife out of their house. But business is business, and until we've paid the last cent of our contributions, we haven't any right to throw stones at anyone. Wait till we've done our part, for that!"

"It's not my business to tell how the Rector and his wife have had to economize and suffer, to get along at all; or

how nice and uncomplainin' they've been through it all. They wouldn't want me to say anythin' of that; sportsmen they are, both of 'em. The price of food's gone up, and the Rector's salary's gone down like a teeter on a log.

"Now, as I remarked before, let's get right down to business. The only way to raise that money is to raise it! There's no use larkin' all round Robin Hood's barn, or scamperin' round the mulberry bush any longer. I don't care for fairs myself, where you have to go and buy somethin' you don't want, for five times what it's worth, and call it givin' to the Lord. And I don't care to give a chicken, and then have to pay for eatin' the same old bird afterwards. I won't eat soda biscuit unless I know who made 'em. Church fairs are an invention of the devil to make people think they're religious, when they are only mighty restless and selfish.

"The only thing to do is to put your hands in your trousers' pockets and pay, cash down, just as you would in any business transaction. And by cash, I don't mean five cents in the plate Sunday, and a dollar for a show on Tuesday. We've none of us any business to pretend to give to the Lord what doesn't cost a red cent, as the Bible says, somewhere. Now don't get nervous. I'm goin' to start a subscription paper right here and now. It'll save lots of trouble, and you ought to jump at the chance. You'll be votin' me a plated ice-water pitcher before we get through, for bein' so good to you—just as a little souvenir of the evenin'."

A disjointed murmur of disapproval rose from sundry parts of the room at this summary way of meeting the emergency. Nelson, who had tried in vain to catch the eye of the chair, rose at a venture and remarked truculently:

"This is a most unusual proceeding, Mrs. Burke."

The chair remained immobile—but Hepsey turned upon the foe like a flash of lightning.

"Precisely, Mr. Nelson. And we are a most unusual parish."

"You have no authority to raise money for the church; I believe the Warden will concur in that opinion?" And he bowed towards Bascom.

"That is a point for the meeting to decide," he replied judicially, as Hepsey turned towards him.

"Seems to me," continued Mrs. Burke, facing the audience, "that authority wont fill the Rector's purse so well as cash. It's awful curious how a church with six vestrymen and two wardens, all of them good business men,—men that can squeeze money out of a monkey-wrench, and always get the best of the other fellow in a horse trade, and smoke cigars enough to pay the Rector's whole salary,—get limp and faint and find it necessary to fall back on talkin' about 'authority' when any money is to be raised. What we want in the parish is not authority, but just everyday, plain business hustle, the sort of hustle that wears trousers; and as we don't seem to get that, the next best kind is the sort that wears skirts. I'd always rather that men shall do the public work than women; but if men wont, women must. What we need right here in Durford is a few full grown men who aren't shirks or quitters, who can put up prayers with one hand while they put down the cash with the other; and I don't believe the Lord ever laid it up against any man who paid first, and prayed afterwards."

"Now brethren, don't all speak at once. I'm goin' to start takin' subscriptions. Who's goin' to head the list?"

A little withered old woman laboriously struggled to her feet, and in a high-pitched, quavering voice began:

"I'd like to give suthin' towards the end in view. Our rector were powerful good to my Thomas when he had the brown kitties in his throat. He came to see him 'mos' every day and read to him, and said prayers with him, and brought him papers and jelly. He certainly were powerful good to my Thomas; and once when Thomas had a fever, our rector said that he thought that a bath would do my Thomas a heap of good, and he guessed he'd give him one. So I got some water in a bowl and some soap, and our rector he just took off his coat, and his vest, and his collar, and his cuffs, and our rector he washed Thomas, and he washed him, and he wa—"

"Well," Hepsey interrupted, to stay the flow of eloquence, "so you'd like to

pay for his laundry now, would you, Mrs. Sumner? Shall I put you down for two dollars? Good! Mrs. Sumner sets the ball rollin' with two dollars. Who'll be the next?"

As there was no response, Mrs. Burke glanced critically over the assembly until she had picked her man, and then announced:

"Hiram Mason, I'm sure you must be on the anxious bench?"

Hiram colored painfully as he replied:

"I don't know as I am prepared to say what I can give, just at present, Mrs. Burke."

"Well now, let's think about it a little. Last night's *Daily Bugle* had your name in a list of those that gave ten dollars a-piece at St. Bridget's fair. I suppose the Irish trade's valuable to a grocer like yourself; but you surely can't do less for your own church? I'll put you down for ten, though of course you can double it if you like."

"No," said Hiram, meditatively, "I guess ten 'll do."

"Hiram Mason gives ten dollars. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. Thanks, Hiram."

Again there was a pause; and as no one volunteered, Hepsey continued:

"Sylvester Perkins, how much will you give?"

"I suppose I'll give five dollars," Sylvester responded, before Mrs. Burke could have a chance to put him down for a larger sum. "But I don't like this way of doin' things a little bit. It's not a woman's place to hold up a man and rob him in public meetin'."

"No, a woman usually goes through her husband's pockets when he's asleep, I suppose. But you see I'm not your wife. Thanks, Mr. Perkins. Mr. Perkins, five dollars," she repeated as she entered his subscription in the book. "Next?" she called briskly.

"Mrs. Burke, I'll give twenty dollars, if you think that's enough," called a voice from the back, timidly.

Everyone turned to the speaker in some surprise. He was a delicate, slender fellow, evidently in bad health. He trembled nervously, and Mrs. Burke hesitated for an instant, between fear of hurting his feelings and letting him give more

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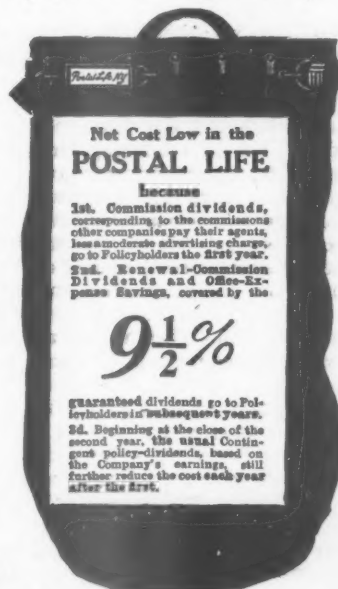
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than she knew he could possibly afford.

"I am afraid you ought not to give so much, Amos. Let me put you down for five," she said kindly. "We mustn't rob Peter to pay Paul."

"No, ma'am, put me down for twenty," he persisted; and then he burst forth: "And I wish it was twenty thousand. I'd do anything for Mr. Maxwell; I owe it to him, I tell you."

The speaker hesitated a moment and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and then continued slowly, and with obvious effort:

"Maybe you'll think I am a fool to give myself away before a crowd like this, and I a member of the church; but the simple fact is that Mr. Maxwell saved my life once, when I was pretty near all in."

Again the speaker stopped, breathing heavily, and there was absolute silence in the room. Regaining his courage, he continued: "Yes, he saved me, body and soul, and I guess I'll tell the whole story. Most of you would have kicked me into the street or lodged me in jail; but he wasn't that kind, thank God!

"I was clerking in the post office a while back, and I left town one night, suddenly. I'd been drinking some, and when I left, my accounts were two hundred dollars short. The thing was kept quiet. Only two men knew about it: Mr. Maxwell was one. He got the other man to keep his mouth shut, handed over the amount, and chased after me and made me come back with him and stay at his house for a while. Then he gave me some work and helped me to make a new start. He didn't say a word of reproach, nor he didn't talk religion to me. He just acted as if he cared a whole lot for me, and wanted to put me on my feet again.

"I didn't know for a long time where Mr. Maxwell got the money for me, but after a while I discovered that he'd given a chattel mortgage on his books and personal belongings. Do you suppose that there's anybody else in the world would have done that for me? It wasn't only his giving me the money; it was finding that somebody trusted me and cared for me, who had no business to trust me, and couldn't afford to trust me. That's what saved me.

"I haven't touched a drop since, and I never will. I've been paying my debt to him as quick as I can, and as far as money can pay it; but all the gold in the world wouldn't even me up with him. I don't know just why I've told all about it, but I guess it's because I felt you ought to know the kind of a man the Rector is; and I'm glad he isn't here, or he'd never have let me give him away like this."

Amos sat down, while the astonished gathering stared at him, the defaulter, who in a moment of gratitude had betrayed himself. The woman next to him edged a little farther away from him and watched him furtively, but he did not seem to care.

UNDER the stimulus of this confession, the feelings of the people quickly responded to the occasion, and a line soon formed, without further need of wit or eloquence on Hepsey's part, to have their subscriptions recorded. In half an hour, Mrs. Burke, whose face was glowing with pleasure—albeit she glanced anxiously from time to time towards old Mr. Bascom, in an endeavor to size up his mood and force his intentions—had written down the name of the last volunteer. She turned towards her audience:

"As I don't want to keep you waitin' here all night while I add up the subscriptions, I'll ask the chairman to do it for me and let you know the result: he's quicker at figurin' than I am, I guess,"—with which compliment, she smilingly handed the book to the Senior Warden. While the old man bent to his task, the room buzzed with low, excited conversation. Enough was already known of Bascom's hostility to the Rector, to make the meeting decidedly curious as to his attitude towards Hepsey's remarks anent the mortgage; and they knew him well enough to be aware that he would not allow that item in her speech to go unanswered, in some way or other.

All eyes rested upon the gaunt figure of the chairman, as he rose to his feet to announce the total of the subscription list. He cleared his throat, and looked down at Hepsey Burke; and Jonathan, as he squinted anxiously at Hepsey by



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his side, noticed that she sat with her eyes tight-closed, oblivious of the chairman's glance. Jonathan looked hastily up at Bascom, and noticed that he shifted his position a little nervously, as he cleared his throat again.

"The amount subscribed on this list is two hundred and thirty-seven dollars and thirty-five cents," he said. The loud applause was instantaneous, and Jonathan turned quickly to Hepsey, as he stamped his feet and clapped his hands.

"Thirty-seven-thirty-five more than we owe him; Hepsey, you've done fine," he chortled.

But Hepsey's look was now riveted on the chairman, and except for a half-absent smile of pleasure, the keenest anxiety showed in her expression.

**B**ASCOM cleared his voice again, and then proceeded:

"Mrs. Burke informed you that the Rector's salary was in arrears to the extent of about two hundred dollars. It is now for this meeting to pass a formal resolution for the application of the amount subscribed to the object in view."

Hepsey's lips narrowed; not a cent was down on the list to the name of the Senior Warden; the debt was being paid without assistance from him.

"I presume I may put it to the meeting that the amount, when collected, be paid over to the Rector by a committee formed for that purpose?" proceeded the chairman.

This resolution being duly seconded and carried, Bascom continued:

"Before we adjourn, I request the opportunity to make a few remarks, in reply to Mrs. Burke's observations concerning the ejection of the Rector from the house which he occupied. She was good enough to spare my feelings by pointing out that from a business or legal point of view it was not I who was responsible for that act, but the parishioners, who, having purchased the rectory subject to a mortgage, had failed to meet the interest upon it. That is what Mrs. Burke said; what she did not say, and what none of you have said in public, though I reckon you've said it among yourselves, I will take upon myself to say for her and you."

He paused—and every eye was fixed upon him and every mouth agape in paralyzed astonishment; and the features of Hepsey Burke were no exception to the rule.

"When," continued Bascom evenly and urbanely, "the word went round that the interest on the mortgage had got behind, and the money must be collected for it, those concerned no doubt," remarked easily: "Oh, I guess that'll be all right. Bascom wont worry about that; he don't need it; anyway, he can pay it to himself, for the parish, if he does."

There was an uncomfortable stirring of the audience at this shrewd thrust; but Hepsey could not contain herself, and laughed right out, clapping loudly.

"And yet I don't mind saying that if I had thought of suggesting to anyone of you such a method of collecting interest due to you, you might have kicked some," he commented drily.

"At the next step, when I ultimately concluded to act upon my right to eject Mr. Maxwell from the rectory, I've no doubt that on all sides it was: 'Well, did you ever know the likes of that? Turning the Rector out of the house and home! Well, he's a skinflint for fair!'"

He paused, and watched the effect. This time his hearers sat absolutely motionless.

"And I agree with you," he added presently, in a quiet voice. "I was a skinflint for fair!"

Almost Hepsey forgot herself so far as to clap thunderously; she caught her hands together just in time—recollecting that her demonstration would be taken too literally.

"But I would not have you misunderstand me: though it was for me to call myself a skinflint for that act, it was not for you to do so. You did so on wrong grounds. Those who in making money have been less successful than others, find it convenient to leave all such obligations upon the shoulders of the richer man, and to say 'It's up to him; he can afford it.' Is it any wonder that it makes the rich man sour on subscriptions and philanthropies? He has as much, or more, of inducement to apply his earnings and savings to his own ends and pleasures; why then, is it not up to all,

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in their own proportions, to meet social needs? A good many years of such meanness among his neighbors makes even a rich man sour and mean, I guess. And that's what it made me—and though that isn't a justification of my act, it gave me as much right to call you skinflints as for you to call me one—all except one of you, Hepsey Burke."

The meeting quivered with tense excitement. What did it all mean? If a chicken had sneezed, the whole gathering would have been dissolved in hysterics, it was so keyed up with a sense of the impending disclosure of a deep mystery.

"Hepsey Burke had a right to call me a skinflint, because she knew what none of you knew; but because it was private knowledge she wouldn't make use of it against me—not unless she couldn't have done what was right any other way. And now I'm going to tell you what she knew:

"The rectory was my wife's property, and she intended it as a gift to the parish, for the rectory of the church. I was preparing the deeds of transfer, when she died—suddenly, as some of you remember." His voice made heroic efforts to keep clear and steady. "Owing to her death before the transfer, that house passed to our daughter; and what I intended to do was to buy it of her and present it to the parish. I delayed, at first for good reasons. And I suppose as I got more and more lonesome and mixed less and less with people I got sourer—and then I delayed from meanness. It would have been easy enough for me to buy it of my daughter, and she'd have been willing enough; but as I saw more and more put upon me, and less and less human recognition—I was 'a rich man,' and needed no personal sympathy or encouragement, it seemed—I held back. And I got so mean I couldn't make friends with the Rector, even."

He paused, and from the half smile on his face, and the hint of brightness that passed over his expression, the audience caught relief.

"I guess a good shaking up is good for a man's liver; it cures a sour stomach—and as there are those that say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, perhaps it cures a sour heart. I got my

shaking up all right, as you know; and perhaps that's been working a cure on me. Or perhaps it was the quiet ministrations of that little Mrs. Betty of yours" (applause) "or the infusion of some of the Rector's blood in my veins—he let himself be bled to keep me alive, after I'd lost what little blood I had, as you probably have never heard." (Shouts of applause.) "Or possibly what cured me was a little knitting-visit that Hepsey Burke paid me the other day, and during which she dropped some home-truths—I can't say.

"Before I decided what I would do about the rectory, I wanted to see what you would do, under Mrs. Burke's guidance, this evening. You've shouldered your share, as far as the Rector's salary is concerned. Well—I'll add what I consider my fair share to that, fifty dollars. The arrears due on the mortgage interest are one hundred and twenty dollars. I shall hold you to your side of that bargain, to date. If you pay the Rector the two hundred dollars due him on his salary, you will need to subscribe about another forty to make up the interest; that done, and paid to me, I will do my part, and present the rectory to the parish, in memory of my dear wife, as she desired."

He sat down.

Hepsey rose and called out in a clear voice:

"He's right; Mr. Bascom's dead right; it's up to us to be business first, and clear ourselves of the debt on a business bargain; then we can accept the gift without too much worryin'." And she sent a very friendly smile over to Bascom.

AGAIN there was some cheering, in the midst of which Jonathan Jackson jumped to his feet beside Hepsey, and facing the room, with his arm through hers, he shouted:

"Hepsey Burke and me will make up the difference!"

Another cheer went up, and Hepsey's face flamed scarlet amid the craning of necks and chaffing laughter—half puzzled, half understanding.

Sylvester Bascom rose to his feet, and there was silence. With assumed serious-

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ness he addressed Hepsey, still standing:

"Mrs. Burke, so that it may be quite in order, do you endorse Mr. Jackson's authority to speak for you in this matter?"

Every eye was turned upon them; but Hepsey could find not a word, so flabbergasted was she by this sudden move of Jonathan's. Jonathan himself colored furiously, but stuck to his guns, and Hepsey's arm:

"Well, to tell the truth," he replied in a jaunty voice, "Hepsey Burke and me's goin' to be married right now, so I guess we'll combine our resources, like."

This announcement gave the *coup de grace* to any further attempt at orderliness, and the room became a seething chorus of congratulatory greetings aimed at Hepsey and Jonathan, in the midst of which Sylvester Bascom slipped out unnoticed.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### OMNIUM GATHERUM

WHEN at last the room emptied, and she was free to do so, Hepsey, accompanied by the possessive Jonathan, found her way over to the Maxwells'. Before she started to tell them the results of the meeting, she cast a glance of whimsical affection at her palpitating fiancé.

"I'd best let him get it off his chest—then we'll get down to business," she laughed.

So Jonathan, amid much handshaking and congratulation, told his victorious story—until, when he seemed to Hepsey to become too triumphant, she broke in with: "Now that's enough for you, Mr. Proudmouth. Let me just say a word or two, will you?"

When they had heard of all that had been accomplished, Mrs. Betty got up and put her arms round Hepsey's neck and gave her such a hug, and a kiss on each cheek, that brought the tears to Mrs. Burke's eyes. And Donald, moist-eyed in spite of himself, took her hand in both of his, and expressed his feelings and relieved the tension at the same time by saying:

"Hepsey Burke, for all your molasses

and the little bit of vinegar you say you keep by you, 'there are no flies on you,' as Nickey would put it."

At which sally Jonathan slapped his knee, and ejaculated:

"No! there aint, by gum! There aint no flies on Hepsey, if I do say it myself."

At which proprietary speech Hepsey wagged her head warningly, saying, as they left, "There's no downin' him, these days; I'm sure I don't know what's come over the man."

On their way home, Jonathan was urgent for fixing the day.

"You said you'd marry me right there and then, if the meetin' came your way, now you know you did, Hepsey," he argued. "So if we say to-morrow—"

But though Hepsey would never go back on a promise, she protested against too summary an interpretation of it, and insisted on due time to prepare herself for her wedding. So a day was set some two months hence.

Meanwhile, Sylvester Bascom's truer and pristine nature blossomed forth in the sunnier atmosphere around him, and after he had delivered himself of his feelings to the Maxwells, in a visit which he paid them next day at their nomadic quarters, he begged leave to put the rectory in full repair before he handed it over to the parish and the Maxwells returned to it.

And he was better than his word; for, with Hepsey and Virginia accompanying her, he insisted on Mrs. Betty's taking a trip to the city a few days later for the purpose of selecting furnishings of various kinds dear to the hearts of housekeepers—Hepsey absorbing a share of the time in selecting her trousseau.

Meanwhile, in due course the rectory was made a new place, inside and out, and a few weeks after their return the transformed house, repainted inside and out, papered and curtained and charmingly fitted with new furniture, was again occupied by the Maxwells.

THAT the interest of the parish should for a while he concentrated on the doings at the rectory, and diverted from her own important preparations, was a blessing to Hepsey—for she continually declared to Mrs. Betty that, little as she



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knew Jonathan in his new manner, she knew herself less!

It was decided that the wedding should be in the church, and a reception held after the ceremony, for the bride and bridegroom, at the rectory—and that, in this way, the whole parish would celebrate, in honor of the auspicious occasion, and of other happy results of Hepsey's parish meeting.

The day before the wedding, while Mrs. Betty and Virginia were busily occupied at Thunder Cliff and the rectory, dividing their attentions between the last touches to Hepsey's wardrobe, and preparing confections for the wedding guests, Donald Maxwell was closeted with Mr. Bascom at Willow Bluff for a considerable time. It was known that the Senior Warden was to support his colleague, Jonathan, at the morrow's event, and it was presumed that the Rector was prompting him in his duties for the occasion.

The ceremony next day at the church was a center of fervent and cordial goodwill and thanksgiving, as Jonathan, supported by Sylvester Bascom, took to wife Hepsey, given away by Mrs. Betty, with Virginia as a kind of maid of honor, hovering near. It was well for Donald Maxwell that his memory served him faithfully in conducting the service, for his eyes were in misty conflict with his bright smile. Nickey, from the front pew, watched his mother with awe-struck eyes and with son-like amazement at her self-possessed carriage under the blaze of so much public attention.

There followed a procession from the church, and soon the rectory, house and garden, were alive with chattering groups, of all sorts and conditions, for the invitations had been general and public, irrespective of class or sect, at Hepsey's special request. There was a constant line of friends, known and unknown, filing past bride and bridegroom, with congratulatory greetings and cordial good wishes. There were speeches from delegations of various local bodies, and from local notables of various degrees; and there were wedding presents, out-vying each other, as it seemed, in kindly personal significance rather than

in costliness. Among them all, and arranged by Mrs. Betty at the very center, the vestry's gift to the bride stood easily first: a plated ice-water pitcher!

It was left to Maxwell to make the farewell speech, as the company crowded round the automobile, lent by the Bascoms, in which Hepsey and Jonathan sat in smiling happiness, ready to drive to the station, on their way for a week's honeymoon.

"Friends!" he said, in a voice that reached to the skirts of the assembled throng, "before we give a valedictory 'three times three' to the happy couple, I have to tell you of a plan that has been made to commemorate this day permanently—and so that Mrs. Jackson may not forget the place she holds in our hearts, and always will hold, as Hepsey Burke.

"It is Mr. Bascom's idea, and I know it will give lasting pleasure to Mrs. Burke—I mean Mrs. Jackson," he corrected, laughing, "as well as to all Durdord, young and old. The beautiful piece of woodland, half a mile beyond Willow Bluff, is to-day presented by Mr. Bascom to the town, and we shall shortly repair there to watch the boys erect the tent now on the church-plot, and which Mr. Jackson has kindly presented to the Boy Scouts."

"Gee," yelled Nickey, in astounded delight, and leading a cheer that interrupted the speaker for some moments.

Maxwell continued: "Mr. Bascom's generous gift to the town will be kept in order by the Boy Scouts, as their permanent camping-ground—and I dare say Nickey Burke will not be averse to occupying the tent with his corps, during the week or so that Mrs. Jackson is to be away. The place is to be called in her honor—'Hepsey Burke Park.' And now—three cheers for the bride and groom."

The cheers were given with wholehearted fervor, as the man at the wheel tooted, and the auto' started on its way with the smiling pair, followed by the people's delighted shouts of approbation at the happy plan for perpetuating among them the cheerful name of Hepsey Burke.

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# When A Man Marries

A HUMAN  
DOCUMENT

By Emily Newell Blair

Author of "We Love and Learn," etc.

**A**LL my life I've wanted to write a story. And all my life I've been tied down to briefs. But now, while I'm alone again, I'll just try my hand at writing my own. I'll not be able to tell the why's and wherefore's as a woman would. I shall not be able to tell all it means to me; but no matter—the writing of it will serve to fill my lonely evenings until—but there, already I am ahead of my story.

I had been married fifteen years when Marian went off to that Convention. I hardly took in just what it was. I only knew in a general way that she was taking quite an interest in women's doings. She was quiet about her affairs—all her affairs, that is, except me. That she made the subject of daily, often hourly, talks. At first, I had rather liked it. I remember the day after our honeymoon was over, when she asked me that first time, "You aren't tired of me yet, Wick?"

From that day the refrain was constantly on her lips. She seemed to think that love was a mere thread, always in danger of snapping. She read those silly things in newspapers telling women how to dress to hold a man's love. Then she would tell me what they said, always ending with "You aren't tired of me yet, Wick?" Sometimes, it was ridiculous. Just after Junior was born she saw in the Woman's Column, "No husband's love remains when once a woman has lost her figure." Marian raced down town the minute she was out of bed, and spent ten dollars for some new corsets.

Now don't think from this that Marian was stupid. On the contrary, she was as bright and dashing as a goldfish. She always gave me a quizzical

smile as she repeated these sentences. Still, I knew that the idea that a man's love wanes hung like a Damocles' sword somewhere in her dressing-room. She was little—came only to my shoulder, with all the appeal of the girl who looks up to you, and besides, she had a bird-like toss of her head that was irresistible. Her little head was dark and shiny. When I first met her at a dance at the Summer Inn, she was wearing her hair in a tight knot at the crown of her head that brought out all the charm of her face. At least I was so sure of it that I always insisted that she shouldn't change it with the fashion. Her skin was very white and her eyes very blue. Oh no, she wasn't a beauty, but she was a girl that any man would look at twice—that is, as long as she was a girl. Someway, you couldn't associate anything but youth with that kind of girl. I never did. For fifteen years she was the same slip of a shiny-haired girl I had married after that brief courtship on the mountains.

**T**HEN she paralyzed me by going off to that Convention. I jeered a bit. It seemed so funny for sprightly little Marian—a mere child like her—to be off conventioning. I had always thought of her club work as akin to her harmless household activities and dressmaking dissipations. But I could see that she thought her election as a delegate an honor, and she had always stuck pretty close to me and the boy. She was entitled to a trip if she wanted it.

She gave a different reason for wanting to go. "It'll do us both good, Wick. I declare I think you must be tired of me. A rest will do you good."

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So I saw her off at the train, still jeering a bit and rather tickled at the idea of her voluntary sacrifice to do me good. I vowed that she looked for all the world as she had when fifteen years before I had brought her home a bride.

"It's the dress, Wick," she laughed. "The blue serge dress and the white wings on my hat. I wore them then. They deserve the credit."

"It may be a similar dress, dear," I insisted, "but I'm looking at that little black head and that pert little nose,"—which I then proceeded to tweak lovingly.

"But it's not, Wick—not at all, and I'm rather sorry for you that some day you'll wake up and find it out."

"May it be a long time coming, dearie, if it's going to change my bird."

All of this, even the kiss I tossed her through the window, not caring who saw it, ought to show plainly what sort of married folks we were, that she was not old, and that I had grown accustomed to being in love.

I SPENT three whole days trying to miss her. I said I couldn't explain sensations. No more can I. But try to imagine a man stretched out on a couch, perfectly relaxed, and you have me. I did lie on a couch. I did relax. And the third day I forgot to write her a line. It was the first time during our short separations that I had ever failed to write her.

Our friends felt sorry for me, so they rushed me with invitations. I could avoid most of them, but not the dinner one from the Russells. They were our best friends and were having a real "party" for an out-of-town guest, a young widow. It was Marian who had promised me for the dinner. I found myself saying unkind things about her as I got myself into my dinner regalia.

I just made the front door in time to struggle hurriedly out of my coat and join my hostess before she went into the dining-room. When we were seated I found myself between Grenda Spruce, one of Marian's girlhood friends, and the widow guest, a Mrs. Bass.

NOW I wonder if I can describe her in any adequate fashion. I fear not, for she was an atmosphere, a feeling rather than a compilation of features. She made all youth seem only an unfinished beginning—raw, crude. For the rest, she had the coloring of *café au lait*, hair, skin and eyes. The hair was like tiny wires out of which something went that seemed to warm and electrify the air about her. Her eyes did not give out, though, but drew in—always drew in and cogitated over what they received. Her admirers all sooner or later found life resolving itself into a desire so to be drawn in and find out what lay there being cogitated. Her nose was long, fine, but her mouth rose to meet it with a half smile that lured one into extravagances in the hope of winning a whole laugh.

"Now, I wonder," she drawled as she turned to me, "I wonder what you would say to that!"

"To what?" I asked eagerly.

"Didn't you hear? We were discussing the new book—the one that's been withdrawn—the German Princess' book. Mr. Spruce, here, does not think she is right when she says— You tell him, Mr. Spruce."

"Haven't you even had a peek at it? Well, you're in bad luck. My wife couldn't wait to warn me—"

"Well, what's it about?"

"What it's about doesn't matter," the widow explained. "It's what it has done. It has put every married man on the defensive by claiming that all men fall out of love when they reach forty, no matter how much in love they've been; and then, of course, being out of love—"

"That's the trouble," cried my host.

"He falls in again, with some one else. Now what do you think?" she asked.

Now why should I have turned red? I don't know but Marian's silly refrain rose unbidden in my ears, "You aren't tired of me yet, Wick?" And her long-expected fear seemed suddenly to be realized. I knew clearly that never before in fifteen years had I noted any woman's hair, eyes, nose or complexion as I had this widow's. I remembered,





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too, that I had not written a single word to Marian for a week. But I was too good a lawyer to plead guilty to any indictment, so I merely laughed and carried the cross-questioning into her testimony. But I didn't get inside the eyes. And I did try. Nor did I get a whole laugh, though I was extravagant.

WHEN I said good-night, Mrs. Russell asked me to make myself at home there while Marian was gone. Then, again, I remembered Marian.

I went home with a queer sensation in the pit of my heart. It was caused by a deadly fear that Marian would soon be coming home and a more deadly fear that she wouldn't. As the next best thing—or perhaps as a sop to conscience, I hunted up her picture—one that had been taken years before. Her bright, childish face with its wide, darling smile, the little round knot of hair, the bright eyes, how youthful and— and unfinished she looked!

"That's never going to do," I said aloud, and propped the picture on my desk while I sat down to write to it. But all unbidden, there rose before my eyes the vision of that other woman with the absorbing eyes. "What did life mean to her?" I asked before I could stop. "A woman, by George, to make a man look sharp." Yes, a woman—that was it—a woman for a grown-up man. Beside her, Marian was but a child. Then my chivalry arose. One doesn't hurt a child, not a child who would say, "You haven't tired of me yet, Wick?"

I swore. It was the child's own fault. I'd have never thought of such a thing if she hadn't put it into my head. Of course then, when I heard the German Princess' nonsense, I had to remember it. For I was forty. I turned to my mirror. When a man does that, he's either a prig or he is in deep waters and is asking for outside corroboration of what he hopes is or isn't true. I wanted some proof I wasn't forty.

But I was. The way I'd widened out—not stout, but large enough to look no longer too tall, that full face with the sagging woman and the firm

spots where my chin joined my cheeks would have told it even if the streak of iron gray above my brows had not. Forty—getting old and—"George, isn't life stupid!" I exclaimed. My mind again entertained the vision of the widow. Life could never possibly be stupid with her. I fell to wondering, and the letter to Marian was not written.

Several days later I heard from my wife. The sight of her neat writing made me cringe. I pulled myself up short. First thing, I'd be hating her if this kept up. And I didn't want to do that. I tore the envelope open with a jerk and read:

Dear Wick:

It's a sin and a shame I've not written before, but the truth is I haven't had a moment's time. I'm on the Civics Committee, and we've had such a lot of business to attend to—resolutions to submit and interviews, too. There is a Mr. Branson, C. H. Branson—perhaps you've heard of him—who has a bill he wants us to work for, and we've had to reach some kind of an agreement. He's at this hotel and times when I might have been writing I've put in talking to him. He's a real treat, anyhow, so keen and yet so—there he is now. We're to dine together to-night.

As ever,

MARIAN.

P. S.—I'm going to be delayed after the Convention is over on this Committee work.

M.

"Well, of all—" I turned back a few words and read again: "He's a real treat, anyway, so keen and yet so—" So what? Well, reading it over wouldn't throw any light on Mr. Branson. However, I read the letter clear through. I was hunting for Marian. That letter might have been from an entire stranger.

I AM a talking man. That's why I'm writing this story. I am articulate. So, the minute I was through dinner, I went over to the Russells. I had been there several times.

I don't know how it happened, but presently Mrs. Bass was talking about Marian. "What is she like?" I repeated.



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I gave her the bird description. She shook her head. "I don't believe it," she answered. "That's just your ideal of her." My ideal! Not at all. That was just the trouble. I liked women who didn't look as if life was all cut and dried.

Mrs. Bass knew Mr. Branson. He was the Chief of the new Food Bureau, and a clever man. Her half smile dropped wide open. The lure of her compelling gaze held me, a tingling from her wiry hair struck against my cheek. A wild desire to take her in my arms and bore a way through those eyes to her heart possessed me. But I got home, somehow. And there, Marian's picture greeted me from the desk where I had placed it. It seemed to me that I should strike at that child-like smile.

I groaned and sank down on my knees. I'm not ashamed to confess it. For I am not a cad and I had loved Marian with all my boy nature. Her coy, timid yielding, her joyous, gay laugh, had fed wholly the desires of the youth that had not counted on the added intensity of a man's passion. And then, she was so blameless. She could not help it that I had grown and left her still in her childhood. I raged at this madness that had come upon me. But I was no coward. I did not deny what had sprung up inside me. I must look it in the face. All night long I looked at it, at it and Marian's picture, from every side. I was an honest man, and I revered Marian. She was my boy's mother. Her old refrain broke in on my ears, "You aren't tired of me yet, Wick?" And I knew the answer. I was most horribly tired.

With morning came a telegram:

Am detained again. Can you come on to Chicago? Need your advice. Branson says come too. Wants to consult you.

MARIAN.

I was not sorry for the excuse to go. It would be easier, I felt, to meet Marian there than here. What would happen in Chicago, I couldn't foresee. I intended to be as honest as I could, but I knew I must allow for human weaknesses, my own tender-heartedness among them.

MARIAN was not expecting me for the simple reason that I forgot to wire her. When I reached Chicago, I went straight to her hotel. A sort of modesty, though, made me hesitate about going to her room. I registered and got my bath. It was almost time for dinner, and I wondered how I was to get in touch with Marian. I knew if I 'phoned up to her, she would insist on my coming up. Then there would be raptures I couldn't respond to. I tarried in the lobby to smoke a cigar over it. In a few minutes, I found myself talking to a chap in the chair next to mine. He was a grayish sort of fellow, grayish suit and hair with long, thin features. We began on the weather and ran on to the Woman's Convention, evidently the last big thing in the city and the chief conversation provender. He expressed great admiration for the way the meetings had been conducted—not only in convention but in conferences which he had attended. "I am waiting now to meet one of its most brilliant women," he explained, handing me a paper where the words, "Mrs. Marian Evans," stared at me under a picture that had familiar landmarks on it, but looked not a mite like the bird-like creature I called my wife.

I glanced again at the man. Could this be Branson? Before I could ask, a voice sounded in my ears, "Why, Wick, what a surprise! Why didn't you let me know?" I turned, and there was Marian—no, not my Marian at all, but the Mrs. Marian Evans of the picture. I kissed her before I thought. She introduced me to Mr. Branson, and said how nice it was that I could dine with them. There were others expected, and almost immediately they joined us: a Congressman—Mr. Boyd—and Zera Bartlett, the writer whose interest in Civics was known even to me. I made a fifth in every way. That was apparent. But the way they all deferred to Marian! That was what "got" me. To Marian, the bird with not an idea in her head but me! And Marian, she "got" me more than that, for I had never seen anyone change so much in so short a time. She didn't even



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### LOOSE-WILES BISCUIT COMPANY

*Bakers of Sunshine Biscuits*  
734 Thomson Avenue, L. I. C., New York



## WHEN A MAN MARRIES

look the same. In the first place, she was larger, much larger—not fat, exactly, but filled out, mature looking. Then the sprightliness was all subdued into a thoughtful “waitingness.” There was a light in her face, but it had no vivacity, rather the light of wonder as of one who has looked on life and is perplexed but not hopeless about it. Her features seemed changed. What struck me first was her hair. It was no longer slick and shiny, but soft and curly and puffy over her ears. She wore a soft, pale, or dull, blue that was all fluffy about her neck, and a hat of the same queer color, drooping and—and well, satisfying—that’s the best I can describe it.

BRANSON seemed as interested in the personalities present as the subjects discussed. I wanted more than anything in the world to ask him a banal, silly question, “Are you married or single?” But I held myself in check. The authoress was gentle, not talkative. She did not hold the Congressman alone, not counting me. It seemed that Marian was the new Chairman of the Civic Committee appointed at the big Convention to go after some new food legislation, that the Congressman was willing to father it, and Branson was head of the department that was urging it. The business was politics and civics mixed, and seemed to require much discussion but permitted many conversational side trips, not to mention looks and smiles. I was merely audience, and I felt it. Marian did not even smile at me, but if I spoke, gave a sort of listening consideration without making any reply. For Branson, she had many remarks. George! how I did want to know if he was married!

At last the evening got away. The others left us at the elevator. I thought that Branson cast a lingering look that referred to some private understanding. And I never waited for an invitation but hurried after Marian to her room. She hardly noticed me, and when I turned from closing the door she was removing her hat as calmly as if we had not been separated for weeks.

“I never saw such a change in anyone in all my life as there is in you, Marian,” I began.

“Change?” she smiled in a tantalizing way. “How foolish! Why, I’ve been changing for about fifteen years, Wick. You’ve just waked up.”

She dropped into the rocking chair while I stood, hands behind me, in a quandary, wondering if I—if I—

“It’s this way,” Marian began. “I was detained by this business, and I saw how big a thing it was. I thought it might be a good thing for you—and I thought you would help me out. I—”

I waved that aside. Of course I was glad to help and told her so. “It seems so queer, though, Marian, your doing such things. I’m afraid I’m going to have to learn a lot about you—”

“I’m glad you are saying that, Wick. It will make it easier to—to confess.” A chill sensation came into my throat. “It wasn’t for just the business I asked you to come. The truth is you don’t know what it’s meant to me to have Mr. Branson take me as I am—now—to-day. It’s made me realize all over again that you—well, that you didn’t know your wife. I—I just couldn’t go back to being that old child-like thing—what you called your ‘bird.’ I—I hate her! No, keep away, please, till I’m through. I—I knew you’d never give her up, but—but Wick, she’s dead. She’s never going back again, never, never, for I’ve seen what it means to be known for what I am—a grown up woman.” There was a still defiance about her that hurt.

I could keep it in no longer. “Marian,” I cried out, “I want to know at once. Tell me, is that fellow Branson married?”

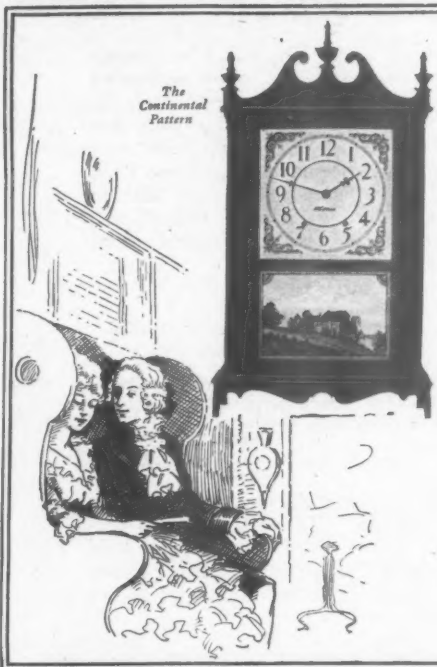
SHE rose, wearily. I thought she wasn’t going to answer, but she did. “Married? Oh, I don’t know. I never asked him.”

The relief was great. Then I remembered something. “How old is he, Marian?”

She looked shocked. “How should I know? Near forty, I should guess.”

I caught her by the arms and looked straight down into her eyes. “Marian,





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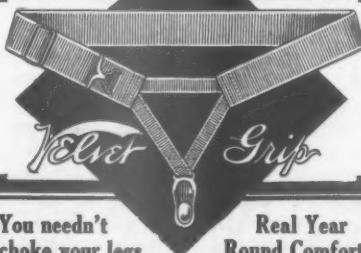
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dear," I said, "forget that Branson fellow. Give me a chance—that's all I want—give me a chance to know you now—as you are. I—oh, don't you understand—I want you changed. I want you grown up."

She caught my coat lapels, and her eyes smiled things I could not interpret. I dropped my face against her fluffy hair and gathered her in a caress that would have scared the old Marian, but this Marian did not even cringe. Instead, her arms went up around my neck.

It was almost an hour later before she asked, "Why, where are your bags, Wick?"

It was then I remembered what had been happening in my heart between her exit and return. For an instant, confession hung upon my lips and died still-born. Even this new Marian could not understand that, thought I.

That was six months ago. The other day, since Marian went to Washing-

ton to see about her bill, I was hunting in her desk for some addresses she had wired for. I picked up a book which had been pushed far back under the pigeon-holes. It dropped open where a correspondence card had been slipped in. I glanced at it and started to see a familiar name. Human nature could not have refrained from reading to the end:

Dear Marian:

I think that you should know. When the cat is away the mouse will play, and there are other cats. The mouse is Wickliffe, and there is a charming widow, Mrs. Bass, visiting here. Look out for trouble. She is no child.

Yours,

GRENDA SPRUCE.

I turned over the book. It was by the German Princess, What's-her-name. Then I laid it gently down. Life could hardly prove stupid for me again. There were still other Marians I hadn't guessed.

## ONLY HUMAN NATURE

By Thomas Gray Fessenden

Author of "Shugrue's Valediction," etc.

**I** HAD been sitting on the bench in the park that July evening perhaps twenty minutes when I noticed the little old gentleman in the ill-fitting gray suit, the soiled white waistcoat and the grimy imitation Panama hat passing my seat for the third time. I had not noticed him more than casually the first time he passed; but the second time I saw his spectacled eyes running me over as his nervous, jerky pace slowed down somewhat.

Now with his third passing he was frankly staring. Moreover, he had stopped short, turned to face me and bobbed his round head in a half nod.

"Will you let me have the other end of the seat?" he asked, striding up to the bench.

"Permission in this particular case isn't mine to give," I replied ungraciously enough. "The seats are quite free to whomever cares to occupy them."

He sat down. He took off the imitation Panama and mopped the band inside with a linen handkerchief.

"This first heat gets to you, doesn't it?" he observed.

I answered very curtly. I have forgotten just what I said but I am sure it was nothing to encourage further conversation. He was silent for a moment, mopping away at that stained sweat-band in his hat. Without turning my head I knew his eyes were upon me.

It was the first real hot wave of the year. The city gasped and sizzled and baked. People who despised park benches

and never tenanted them at another time were sitting all about, hoping—vainly—for a cooling evening breeze to spring up. The heavy odor from syringa bushes in full bloom seemed to make the dead air even heavier and more lifeless; the thick dust on the leaves of the trees showed the need of rain.

On a bench just across from the one on which we sat, a stout and uncomfortable-looking woman was crooning to a fretful child in her arms. She was quite unaware that the child's restlessness was caused by a solemn-eyed little girl next to her, who now and then tickled the pink soles of the baby's bare feet. Between times the solemn-eyed little girl munched peanuts from a paper bag between her sharp little knees. She had just discovered that the rough edges of a cracked peanut shell were productive of beautiful results on the baby's feet and was about to experiment with one for the second time, when my neighbor on the other end of the bench, whose presence I had quite forgotten for the moment, remarked that the sky looked as if it would be quite as hot to-morrow.

Plainly he was one of those wordy individuals who would talk interminably for the mere sake of talking. I cast my eyes about for another bench, but other benches on such a night there were none. The little man was asking me if I remembered the three hot spells in the summer of '93.

I gave him to understand that I wasn't at all interested in any former hot spells and that comparisons were odious things at the best.

He smiled amiably, with a hint of pity in his eyes. Then he said he could see the heat got on my nerves; he asked me if I had tried lunching on milk and vichy and a few crackers. He recommended it highly. Indeed, he grew quite enthusiastic. I told myself with the first wisp of breeze I'd get up and move on; for the present it seemed to be a matter of a choice of evils with me. I felt it was better to endure his chatter than to go to the exertion of moving in that still, smothering heat.

So I leaned back on the bench and let him rattle on, answering him only when it would have been openly discourteous

not to do so, and even then with as few words as possible.

Yet he chattered on quite undiscouraged. His kangaroo mind jumped here and there, hither and yon. Weren't the women wearing ridiculous clothes these days? What an ass a certain senator had made of himself in the stand he had taken against the administration's policies. Had I ever seen the Matterhorn at sunset? Was there ever a summer when the city streets had been so neglected?

Across the way the stout woman with the baby had finally fathomed the true cause of its restless turnings and jumpings; the solemn-eyed little girl had taken the resulting chastisement without a whimper, but now she was eating her peanuts with her back coldly and accusingly turned on her mother. The little affair had not been without interesting side-lights, and, engrossed in it, I had only half-heeded the flow of talk beside me.

But the voice, quivering with indignation—the same voice which had been droning on tiresomely about the mistakes of the city administration—made me turn suddenly.

"That is wickedly foolish to strike a child like that," it said.

"Oh, she richly deserved it," said I.

"Patience—what is it Verlaine says about it?" he began.

"I hope you're not one of the misguided ones who take Verlaine seriously," I snapped.

"I am afraid I do," he replied with a slow smile. "At least I take him seriously enough always to carry a couple of things of his in my pocket. Let me read them to you."

He reached for the inner pocket of the wrinkled gray coat. Out came a sheaf of papers. At the same time something brown slipped from the pocket, struck his knees and tumbled to the dirt at our feet. I stooped to pick it up. It was a photograph, small enough for the pocket, with the inevitable cover of stiff brown paper. As it fell, the cover opened. It lay there face-up. I couldn't help seeing the regular features of a wonderfully pretty girl, smiling up at me from the dull brown mount.

Masses of hair were piled high on her

head; two eyes, wonderfully human for a photograph, looked out from drooping, long-lashed lids; a chin with the faintest cleft in it sloped down to a perfect white throat.

Perhaps I looked at that photograph in the light of the near-by arc lamp rather longer than I thought; anyway, the little man was regarding me with twinkling eyes as I passed it to him.

"Thank you," said he, taking it, and laying it, still open, on his knee, where we could both look at it. "That is my daughter, Frances. Wonderful little girl! Wonderful little pal! Nobody knows how I miss her. She's been in Berlin over a year now, studying music. This photograph is a cheap affair. It doesn't half do her justice."

I looked at the little brown print on his knee again. I knew he was regarding me with that same twinkle in his eyes; but I did not care. And, even as I looked, he was off on a long dissertation concerning his daughter.

Strangely enough, the bench and its occupants across the way lost their interest for me. Moreover, he was speaking faster and with more enthusiasm than he had yet displayed, and heaven knows he had been anything but lacking in enthusiasm in his other subjects.

Also as the father of the girl in the photograph he became an entirely different proposition. His clothes were not as shabby, his hat not as grimy, his verbosity not so obtrusive, himself not such an inexcusable intruder.

The more I looked at that photograph, the better I liked that pretty, smiling face; and the more I hung on his every word as he rattled on about his daughter, the better I liked the photograph.

I learned that it had been quite an undertaking to induce Frances to leave him and go abroad; that his pecuniary circumstances were not what they had been once; indeed, under the sworn seal of the confessional, I was permitted to know that he was working in the office of a downtown coffee-house; that the pay wasn't much, but that it permitted him to send that much more money each month to his daughter; that he lived in an "apartment"—he mouthed the word with a delicious little grimace—of one

room, a bath and a kitchenette in a shabby street of small apartments no great distance from the park. Incidentally I learned that his name was Kirk Ober and that he was sixty-six.

As I think of it now it was a rather childish, disjointed recital. But, sitting there on the park bench, looking at the lovely face of the Frances Ober of the photograph, there was something rather touching, rather fine about it all. I was ashamed of my curt and ungracious snubs of the earlier evening. Here was a lonely little old gentleman—the father of the girl in that photograph, although, of course, I did not put it that way then—hungering for some one to talk to, to pass away a hot, lonely evening. I felt like apologizing, like abasing myself to him, like making whatever amends I might.

So, when he had finally found the two little things of Verlaine's for which he was looking, I revised somewhat my criticism of that pot-house rhymster. I listened while he read them in French of an atrocious inflection. I said I had missed their beauty before, but I thought I saw it now.

Then I walked with him to the gate of the park. He begged me to dine with him the following Friday evening. He said he did his own cooking and that he was a famous master of pots and pans and gas-ranges. Then he said his daughter held much the same views of Verlaine as did I. It did him good to hear her arguments and criticisms fired at him once more. He added, looking me over with a glance quietly measuring, that he thought Frances and I would get on famously together. I accepted the invitation for Friday evening.

SO much for the witchery of a face smiling out of a little brown sepia photograph.

The one-room apartment was very small. The heat from the inside kitchenette was terrific. The furniture of the place was evidently the remnants of better days.

We dined on a little folding table, with legs so shaky that our glasses went awash on the table cloth when we tried to cut the steak. The steak itself was



This Man Wrote

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\*Except the Judges

Mr. F. N. Doubleday and Mr. S. Keith Evans



overdone and charred, the potatoes like bullets, the asparagus water-logged, the coffee rank and bitter. But Ober talked much of his daughter; I saw the photograph again; I learned of her gentleness and her sweetness and her courage and her patience, and all was well.

Ober dined with me downtown after that. He seemed rather ill at ease, as if he were accepting hospitality that he shouldn't have been accepting. I remember particularly the insistence of that impression upon me. And that was the only time he would dine with me. So we came to the better common ground of dropping in on each other; he running often to my rooms; I running over often to his.

And I learned much more of Frances Ober; I heard little excerpts from her letters; and the face of the little brown photograph grew more and more alluring, the throat more round and white, the cleft in the chin more fetching. I found myself counting the weeks and the days until her return—she was coming back just before Christmas. And garrulous little old Kirk Ober, with his bald head and his moon face and his sloppy clothes and his kangaroo mind that jumped hither and yon from subject to subject, became in my eyes something finer and gentler and nobler in his child-hearted sacrifices for Frances.

So much, again, for the witchery of that face in the brown sepia print.

IT was one crisp October night that I found it necessary to hunt up Billy Shaw. Billy was on the other side of a case that I felt certain could be settled out of court. Billy had left his office when I got there. So I took a taxi out to Billy's apartment and found him, for a wonder, at home.

The business that had taken me there has nothing at all to do with this story, save that it took me to Billy Shaw's. When we had finished it and Billy was smoking one of my cigars, I happened to see a little brown sepia photograph on his dresser.

Billy came out of college with the reputation of the brainiest man in several decades, but Billy did not live up to his reputation. Things had sort of slid along

with Billy, with Billy quite content to let them slide. He seemed satisfied that his practice brought him in enough to live on comfortably, and to follow up all the musical shows, for which Billy had a decided penchant as well as for the pretty faces appertaining thereto. Therefore the little brown photograph—the smiling face with the eyes, very human for a photograph, looking out from under half-closed, long-lashed lids, the piled up masses of hair on the head, the chin with its little cleft sloping back to the perfect, rounded throat, rather startled me. I picked it up.

"Some Jane—what?" Billy demanded at length.

I was aware he was grinning more broadly as I swallowed hard at something that suddenly arose in my throat.

"So you know Miss Ober?" I said.

"Huh?" said Billy.

"You know Miss Ober—Miss Frances Ober," I repeated, tapping the picture in my hand.

Billy stared; then he grunted.

"Oh, wake up, Ted, wake up!" he advised. "When did she tell you she was Frances Ober?"

"She has never told me that."

"Well, where'd you ever meet her?"

"I have never met her."

"No? I'll take you round when she's back in town. That's Clarice Vance, with the 'Man In A Million' company. Does the dance with Fred Hare in the third act—remember, or didn't you see the show? Real name is Nellie Connors. That chin's pure Irish, if you'll notice."

"Do you know anything about her father?" I asked.

"Foreman—paving yard—Fourth District," said Billy. "Here!"

He opened a drawer and took out a number of larger photographs. I saw Miss Vance in a bathing-suit, Miss Vance as a bell-boy, Miss Vance in the costume in which she did the dance with Fred Hare.

"Could anyone get these photographs anywhere in town?" I asked him.

"You old devil!" said Billy. "Yep. You can get all you want and more at Blaisdell's Studio downtown. The more you buy the better; she gets a rake-off on the sales."



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I picked up the little sepia print again. "Would you let me take this for a day or so, Billy?" I asked.

"Sure! Wouldn't you rather have this one in the bathing-suit?" he suggested, with a facetious thumb prodding my ribs.

"This will do better," said I, pocketing the sepia.

I HAD suffered succeeding poignant waves of disappointment, anger, bitterness and disgust when at last the taxi drew up at the curb before the ornate stucco entrance of the apartment house where Ober lived.

The little room smelled villainously of grease and cheap tobacco as I opened the door. Ober jumped up with the pleased little chirping cry that always greeted my arrival.

But before he could begin his effusive welcome, I had Clarice Vance's photograph in his hands.

"If you are the father of Clarice Vance," I said venomously, "the Clarice Vance who gets a rake-off from the sale of her photographs at the Blaisdell Studios, your name must be Connors instead of Ober. Anyway, I think there's some little explaining coming to me."

He sank down limply in one of those heavy, out-of-place chairs. He stared at the photograph, blinking his eyes rapidly, as if somehow the sight of it hurt him.

"So you've found me out," he said, without looking at me. "They all do, sooner or later. Of course I ought to say I'm sorry; the only thing I'm sorry about is that you've found me out so soon. I imagine there's nothing to do but to say good-by."

"There's a great deal more to be said," I reminded him sharply.

"From you?" he asked wearily.

"From you!" I said meaningly.

He closed the cover of the photograph and passed it to me, still refusing to let his eyes meet mine.

"All right!" said he. "It isn't the first time I've done it, although not always with the same photograph. My name is Ober; that much is right. Also it's quite true that I've seen better days and that I've come down in the world and that I'm very, very lonely. I know I'm old

and garrulous and generally uninteresting. I've had that forced on me time and time again. But I have known interesting people in my day, people worth while, people to whom I like to talk and who I liked to have talk to me.

"Of course a few of them drop in on me even now; but it isn't the same. Charity and the Good-Samaritan air is stamped all over them. They come to see me because it's their duty to come. That is horribly, ghastly apparent. But it's only human nature to be liked for yourself or because of something you have. Well, I haven't anything now."

He swept a comprehensive arm about the sorry apartment.

"So—so," he went on in a lower voice, "I bought the pictures of — of — well, what I'd liked a daughter, if I'd ever married and had one, to look like. I did it because it made me interesting to the right kind of men. They came to me and talked to me not as if I were an object of their pity and their charity, but as if I were some one to be envied in being the father of such a girl. I—I—oh, what's the use? It's all over. You've found me out. They all find me out sooner or later, but the game's worth it for what I get out of it—for the way they treat me—before I *am* found out. Good-by!"

I got as far as the door. Something made me turn. He was sitting there in the huge old chair—the relic of those better days—with his head bowed and his fingers picking nervously at what was faintly left of the crease in the shabby trousers. I took my hand from the knob.

"I have been coming here each Tuesday and Thursday evening, haven't I?" I asked.

He did not answer.

"Good-by!" I said.

Then I clicked the latch.

"Until Thursday, at the usual time," I added.

He gripped hard at the arms of the chair. His head went lower. I could see the corners of his mouth twitching.

"I don't deserve it," he said huskily. "But God bless you for it, all the same!"

I imagine my own chin was none too firm as I went down the varnish-smelling stairs.

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# THE ISLAND OF SURPRISE

*Continued from page 1170 of this issue.*

"I can guess," was the prompt interruption as Miss Cassilis divined the question Miss Arden proposed to put.

"Doubtless," was the answer, "but I want to know what you meant by what you said last night."

"To what particular saying of mine last night do you refer? Was it my remarks about you and the Doctor?"

"You know very well to what I refer. I want to know exactly what is the relationship which you declared existed between you and Mr. Lovell."

"You acted outrageously last night; you apologized for it this morning, although it was evident that your apology was dictated by nothing but a sense of duty. I accepted your apology. I recognize no right in you to question me about my relations to anyone, much less to Mr. Lovell. I do not think that the duty of watching over the son is involved in your position as private secretary to the father, and I decline once and for all to discuss the subject further with you. If we are to meet on any terms on the yacht, and I suppose being shut up in one small ship we shall have to, it can only be on the condition that you make no further reference to the affair. I felt humiliated that I vouchsafed you any explanation at all."

"You don't know what you are saying," burst out Dorothy Arden, scarcely able to contain herself. "You don't realize what is involved in my question. As you say, I may have no right from your point of view, but if you knew you would understand and answer me."

But Dorothy Arden did not dare to vouchsafe that simple and natural explanation of her interest which would have accounted for everything. She could only look at the other woman with a mixture of appeal and resentment in her gaze.

"I suppose," continued Dorothy Cassilis with ill-concealed disdain, "that you are counting on those ephemeral attentions which susceptible young men some-

times so far forget themselves as to pay to persons in your condition. I suppose that Mr. Lovell has not been as discreet as he might have been. I will admit," she went on with a note of detached and indifferent appraisement which fairly roused the other woman to fury, "that you are a very fascinating person, not in your present mood, perhaps, but when you wish to be, and the more so because there is usually a certain amount of outward reserve about you."

"This is unbearable," cried Dorothy Arden. "I will have an answer. What is Robert Lovell to you and what are you to him? I can see that you love him. You have not made any concealment of that to me or anyone on the ship."

"Your insolence is beyond belief. If you want an answer to your question, get it from some one else. Meanwhile, don't presume to speak to me again."

"I will get an answer from him, then, and I will get it in your presence. Here he comes."

THERE was a crashing through the bushes far above them. They saw Lovell plunging rapidly and recklessly down the hill toward them. He was excitedly waving his hand as a signal. The silence with which they awaited him was broken by the deep detonation of a cannon. The yacht was armed with several guns. Cruising in these latitudes, there might be occasions when they would be needed badly. Evidently one of them had just been fired. The next moment more faintly came to them the shrill scream of her siren. Something was happening. In vague terror, they stared at the on-coming man. The questions that had been uppermost were in abeyance for the moment, although gun or no gun, siren or no siren, Dorothy Arden was determined to put them at the first opportunity.

The next moment Lovell descended to them. He was panting from his long run, and very greatly agitated.

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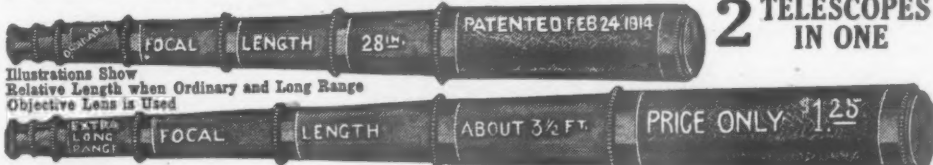
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"Come," he said, extending a hand to each woman, "we must get back to the ship."

Neither of them started. They were reasonable beings, and they wanted an explanation.

"What is it?" exclaimed Dorothy Cassilis.

"A great storm! I went around the shoulder of the mountain; the sky is black with clouds. It has come up with startling suddenness. You can't see from here for the hill. They could not see from the yacht either at first, but they have evidently discovered it now. We must get back to the ship if she can wait for us."

"Wait for us!" exclaimed both women. "What do you mean?"

"The *Wanderer* must put to sea and get away from these reefs and islands or she will surely be wrecked. There isn't another minute. We must get back."

"Won't they wait for us?"

"As long as they can, but they can't wreck the yacht for us."

He took a girl by each hand and ran as rapidly as circumstances permitted through the trees toward the plateau they had visited in the morning.

"Is there no shorter way?" panted Dorothy Arden.

"I know of none."

Spurred on by the sharp shriek of the siren and an occasional gun-shot, the three ran desperately across the level. Instead of making the wide detour which they had made previously in traversing the plateau they ran straight toward the edge nearest the landing place. The way led them through thick undergrowth. The sprint was nothing for Robert Lovell, but it meant a good deal to the women. Finally he fairly had to drag them along, and at last they stopped.

"We must have a moment," said Dorothy Cassilis breathlessly.

"Well," he said, "sit down here while I see if there isn't a shorter cut to the beach."

He ran up a little hillock. He could see the yacht from where he stood. Black smoke was rolling out of her funnels. The launch was alongside. The anchor was hove short. The chain was up and down, and as he stared seaward a

tremendous gust of wind broke overhead only to die away again. The sky was black with driving clouds. The storm was about to break. It was at least two miles to the shore by the road up which they had come. The edge of the cliff, however, was only a short distance away. He decided that the yacht could not wait longer than ten minutes with safety. The launch had left the side of the yacht and was now headed toward the lagoon, evidently hoping to get them.

There must be some other way down. It would save half an hour if he could get them to the edge of the cliff and somehow drop them down. The wall did not seem to be more than thirty or forty feet high, as nearly as he could judge from where he stood. He came back to the two girls.

"I am sorry," he said, "but you will have to summon your strength for a last effort. That storm will break in ten minutes. The edge of the cliff is only a hundred yards away. We must try to get down it. The launch has put off for us. I will help you all I can."

The tired women rose wearily for the last dash for the shore. The undergrowth was very thick. Lovell did not know what it might conceal, but he plunged through it recklessly, pulling them along with him. When he fancied he had almost reached the edge of the cliff he released the hands of the women and tore his way through the entangling bushes, shouting to them to come on. His progress was slower, but his body made a way for them, and they pressed close after him.

Suddenly they heard him break into a wild cry—they saw him plunge forward and disappear. Such was their own momentum that they could not stop. Dorothy Cassilis tottered; Dorothy Arden caught her; and the next moment they were staggering on the brink of the cliff which had been hidden by a coppice which grew to the very edge.

Into the minds of each flashed the reason for Lovell's disappearance. Running recklessly, he had plunged forward and fallen over. They sought desperately to save themselves, but in vain. They threw out their arms, and in another



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moment they both plunged into the air and knew nothing.

#### CHAPTER XIV

##### *Two Eves in the Eden*

**T**WO women and a man on an island! Marooned, deserted, left behind! In a cool, deep cleft in the coral wall, with thick verdure clad and masked by gigantic palms, the bodies lay silent, motionless. Dead? Asleep? The slow rise and fall of breasts answered no to the one question; pallid faces, distorted positions negated the other. Unconscious? Yes. A sleeve had been rent from one woman's dress. There was a long horrid gash from which the blood oozed in her round white arm. A shoe had been lost from the foot of the other, and like the arm of her sister, that out-thrust foot had been deeply cut, and the delicate silk stocking torn and stained.

The man lying between the two appeared to be in worse case than either of them. He seemed to have pitched forward and to have struck on his head. He lay face downward, his head bent underneath his breast in a horribly unnatural position.

Presently life, which had seemed in abeyance in the abandoned three, asserted itself. Dorothy Cassilis opened her eyes and gazed stupidly upward. She raised herself on one hand, passed the other across her brow and face as if to brush away some veil or mask that obscured the light. She noticed that her clothes were torn and soiled. It was damp in the narrow cleft, and muddy where they had fallen close to the brook.

She sat upright, pushed back her unbound hair, which fell in golden masses about her shoulders, and gazed stupidly at her unshod foot, not yet conscious of the cut. Singularly enough, the loss of her shoe seemed the most unpleasant episode in her predicament. Struggling to her feet, she found herself badly bruised and shaken, but except for her wounded foot, the pain of which now made her wince, she was able to move at will. Resting her weight on her unhurt

foot, she grasped the slender trunk of an adjacent palm and looked about her still bewildered.

Instinctively, as humanity always does on island shores, she looked toward the sea. Her eyes swept the segment of horizon comprehended between the opening walls of the cleft in the rock. She stared at first vaguely, but presently she caught sight of the fast-flying, far-off ship, the black smoke rolling out of her funnels, the wake and bow waves gleaming whiter than her hull over the deep cobalt of the sea. Recollection came back with a rush; she woke to an instant comprehension and full realization of the situation. The yacht was leaving them behind! They were abandoned on this deserted, unknown island!

"She's gone," she cried shrilly.

The narrow walls of the cleft caught up the sound and echoed it in wild concatenation. Perhaps it was the first time these rocks had ever had a chance to throw back and forth a human voice. It was as if nature, even inanimate, thrilled to the call of man, the cry of woman. And the voice penetrated the dull ear of her prostrate sister as well. The head that had been lying backward, its dark hair flung behind it, moved, lifted; the dark eyes unclosed; Dorothy Arden stretched out her hands. She rose on her arm and stared about her. The movement attracted the attention of Dorothy Cassilis. She cried hysterically:

"The yacht—it's gone. We are left behind."

But Dorothy Arden was not interested in the ship. She was not even aware of the blood dripping from her round white arm. Her eyes had caught sight of the man, and she saw nothing else.

"Look there," she said, her deeper voice shaking with emotion.

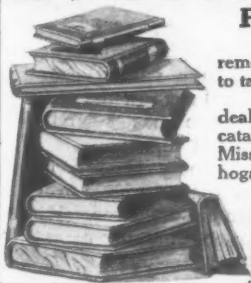
As she spoke, she rose to her feet. She pointed ahead of her to the distorted figure of Robert Lovell. She stood unsteadily, not yet mistress of herself, her head whirling, and stared down at the bent, contorted body. Dorothy Cassilis instantly followed glance and word. The flying ship was erased from her consciousness. With a low cry she sprang toward Lovell, and her wounded

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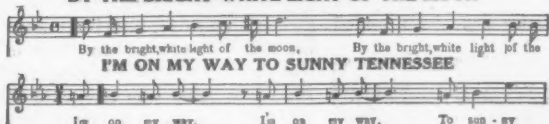
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foot left a bloody track upon the ground unheeded. She bent over him, and although she was a slight and slender woman she had strength to turn him over, to straighten him out. Dorothy Arden stood still until she saw the white face disclosed; then she put her hand to her heart and groaned in anguish.

"Water," said Dorothy Cassilis imperiously from her place beside Lovell.

"And why do you not get it yourself?" asked Dorothy Arden, stopping after a step toward the brook.

"My foot," was the sharp answer, "—it is cut—"

**DOROTHY ARDEN**, accepting that as sufficient excuse, staggered down to the running water. She tore a piece from the white petticoat she wore. She dipped it into the water, and making a cup of her hands, she came back, dashed the water into the face of her husband and then, resentful of Dorothy Cassilis' position, she took from her the wetted cloth and knelt and bathed Lovell's head herself.

"Oh," asked Dorothy Cassilis in an agony of uncertainty, "is he dead?"

"Not yet," was the answer from lips that were white, not from the hurts or the fall but from anxiety unspeakable. "He lives, he breathes. O God, have mercy upon him and give him back to me."

"No, to me," promptly exclaimed Dorothy Cassilis, as she looked with instant recrudescence of hatred and rivalry at the other.

"Why to you?" questioned Dorothy Arden fiercely. In her darker eyes leaped the quick, determined challenge to the angry sparkle in the blue eyes that confronted her so disdainfully. The unconscious man himself interrupted the threatening clash of arms. He moved slightly, and both women turned to him.

"Thank God, his eyes are opening," exclaimed Dorothy Arden.

She was closer to him; she bent over him as if to speak, her dark hair falling in masses unbound about her face. The other woman reached out her hand and thrust her away.

"Let me see," she exclaimed with fierceness.

Retort trembled upon the lips of Dorothy Arden as she resisted the pressure of that extended arm, but now the voice of the man broke through their discords. He faltered an indistinguishable word or two. His eyes were wide open. He looked vastly surprised and eagerly wondering. He turned his head slowly from one to the other. Both warring women were on their knees, bending over him, eager, frantic, to hear him speak. The slope of the ground enabled him to look beyond them without lifting his head. For a moment he stared through the trees down the ravine to the ocean, entirely uncomprehending, bewilderment, inquiry, expressed in his face. It was as if he had never seen the sea or shore before.

"Help me up," he whispered, looking at them again.

"You would better lie still," said Dorothy Arden.

"You have been hurt," said the other.

"Nonsense," said Lovell more strongly. "I must get up."

He put his hand behind him and tried to raise himself. The hands of both women instantly went out to him. One at his back and one at his head, they lifted him to a sitting position, and then in obedience to his gesture they both drew away and looked at him with tragic intensity of vision. Supporting himself on one hand, Lovell passed his other hand across his brow. He seemed to be thinking deeply, for he turned from one to the other, putting out his hand for silence when one sought to speak.

"Wait a moment," he began falteringly. "Let me think."

And there was not a shadow of recognition of either woman in his glance. There could be no mistake about that. He did not yet know them. What could it mean, questioned each woman in her heart. It was he who broke the silence again. By chance or deliberately, he turned toward Dorothy Arden on his left.

"But who—" he began with faltering voice, "who—are you?"

"Oh," said the woman in accents of surprised pain, "don't you know me?" She did not wait for an answer to her

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## THE ISLAND OF SURPRISE

question. "I am your wife," she added quickly.

Robert Lovell stared at her, open-mouthed, while Dorothy Cassilis' voice broke in sharply. She was horrified at what she thought was a false claim so suddenly made to take advantage of his mystification to take from her the man she loved; the man who, she was sure, would instantly have repudiated the relationship if he had been in his senses.

"No, no," she burst out impulsively as his face turned to her. "She is not your wife, but—"

"And how dare you question—" began Dorothy Arden hotly.

But Dorothy Cassilis did not wait for the completion of the sentence. Throwing everything to the winds to checkmate the other woman at any cost, she said with tremendous emphasis:

"I am your wife—not she."

She would fight fire with fire, meet claim with claim, go to any limit to keep the man who was to be her husband.

"Speak," said Dorothy Arden with confident imperiousness. "Which of us is your wife?"

She spoke assuredly, as if certain of the answer. Of course she could see that Lovell was not in full possession of all his faculties as yet, but she was sure that in so great a crisis he would remember and his answer must vindicate her and cover her rival, whom she now regarded with contempt.

"Tell the truth before God and the two of us," exclaimed Dorothy Cassilis, but with entreaty and anxiety and incertitude she sought desperately to disguise the trembling in her voice. "Is she your wife?"

"Answer," urged the other, while Dorothy Cassilis waited breathless, wondering at the daring of Dorothy Arden, and expecting her confutation the next moment.

ROBERT LOVELL stared from one to the other again in a bewilderment that grew and grew. In her eagerness Dorothy Arden rose to her feet and stood

confronting him; Dorothy Cassilis remained kneeling. The distraught man looked up at the one, down at the other.

"I don't know what you mean," he said slowly and brokenly but very decisively at last. "As God is my judge—I never saw either of you—in my life—before—on my honor."

Silence, while the three stared! Silence, while the women looked at each other! Silence, while both looked at the man! He smiled at last deprecatingly under their intent, devouring gaze. A low laugh broke weakly from his white lips.

"Forgive me young—young ladies," he said, "but is it some huge—" His voice died away. He put his hand to the back of his head and brought it back before his face stained with blood. He held it up in front of him and studied it with impersonal gravity. "I don't understand," he continued vaguely, withdrawing his gaze from his hand and looking at the two women again. "My wife, you say—wives?" He made a great effort to finish his words: "Is it a huge—joke?"

His speech ended suddenly, and he collapsed. Both women bent quickly over him. The one on her knees was nearer and closer.

"My place," said Dorothy Cassilis, reaching out her hands, but before she could touch Robert Lovell, Dorothy Arden caught her swiftly by the shoulders with both hands.

"No, mine," she cried, fairly lifting her rival to her feet in her mad and jealous passion.

The two women stood confronting each other over the senseless body of the man. Forest primeval and passions primeval to match; blazing eyes, heaving breasts, clenched hands—jealousy, hatred, disdain, determination in every clashing glance of flaming eyes that met and would not yield.

Over their heads the storm broke suddenly. A terrific peal of thunder rolled athwart the heavens, and ere it died away upon them fell the first drops of rain, precursors of the tempest.

**The next installment of "The Island of Surprise" will be in the May issue of The Red Book Magazine, on the news-stands April 23rd.**

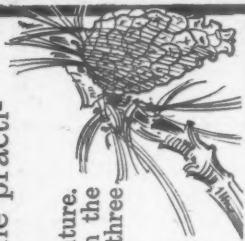


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## EMPTY POCKETS—by Rupert Hughes

*Continued from page 1110 of this issue.*

each day's task at eternally the same beginning, getting nowhere but to exhaustion. This was poverty, a life so devoid of luxury, of prettiness, of reward that even the sensuousness of sleep must never be satisfied.

Here loving was loafing, kisses and caresses were a foolishness, silks and jewels and gracious attitudes and plaiting of the hair were a wickedness. Everything that was desirable was abomination, everything abominable was duty.

She had escaped it once, and she had come back. These denizens of the slime would despise her. Suddenly she felt that it was only her return that was despicable.

In the window the dingy canary was flopping from perch to perch and back again, pecking at the bars, trying to find a way out into the deepening sunlight. She remembered the free birds she had seen in Fort Washington Park with huge tulip trees for their perches and the world for their cage. She remembered that she had promised to give her own bird liberty. She rose and ran barefoot to the window and opened the little wire door.

The bird was afraid of freedom as she had been and flung itself here and there in the corners with frantic wings. At last she turned the cage on the side, tilted it till the bird fell through, saved itself with unaccustomed struggles, found itself outside and fluttered to the railing of the fire-escape, wondering at its enfranchisement and afraid of the universe.

She whispered to it: "Fly away—leetla beerd — fly away — dun't be scared."

But it hopped along the rusty iron rail, chirping ungrateful protests. She thrust out her bare arm and shook her fingers at it. And then it made off on uncertain pinions. It drew a little golden line of flight to the foreign cornice on the other side of the canyon and rested from the great voyage. Maryla rejoiced at her deed till a little gang of cockney sparrows saw it and, jealous of

its yellow finery, mobbed it and drove it on into the wilderness.

Maryla pondered the dubious benefit of its liberty a moment and took an omen from it. She surrendered to her lot and was creeping chilled back into her bed, when one more glance about the tenement sickened her of poverty so violently that she ran tiptoe behind the curtain of the wardrobe.

When she emerged she was dressed. She sat on a chair and buttoned her boots stealthily. She found her hat and fastened it to her hair with the amethyst-headed pin.

She was faint with hunger and was tempted to make coffee but she feared to linger. Her father's soul was beginning to do battle with sleep, and she knew that if she caught his eye he would re-dominate her.

She passed the heap of money Pasinsky had left where he poured it out for her. She hesitated; then she felt that it would please him if she took a little of it. She drew away a ten-dollar bill and a little silver, and went a-tiptoe to the door—unlocked it slowly, and opened it so carefully that it could not squeal in alarm. She paused to whisper to the wretched prisoners she left behind:

"Good-by—good-by!"

Then she stepped into the hall and closed the door with infinite caution.

### II

MARYLA took a street-car to her former boarding place and was welcomed to a hall bedroom exactly like her old one and exactly like ten thousand others in town. She sat on the narrow bed with its scant, coarse furniture, and pondered her situation. What was the next thing? What about food and clothes? At length she reached a cynical resolve to take a long chance. She went to Dutilh's shop and with a desperately casual smile prepared to broach the elaborate lie she had woven.

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He flounced away, and Maryla gazed after him with mingled shame and adoration. She knew that he understood.

Dutilh's experience had educated him beyond sneers or sermons or amusement. He felt sorry that one more pretty adventuress had tried the primrose path and then been chucked out of it; but, since the rush for fall and winter clothes was on, and he could find employment for her again, he was willing to save her the trouble of explanatory fables. He did not resemble a philanthropist, yet the person who gives a fallen girl the pick-up of a job is the truest charity worker of all.

And so Maryla resumed her life as a traveler through numberless beautiful robes. She suffered less desire now to own what she wore. She was glad to tire herself out in her task, since fatigue was the perfect opiate for the long nights and the loneliness and the hurt pride. She tired more easily than before, and she was the prey of an incessant terror.

She began to save her meager earnings with a fierce economy—feathering her nest, she was. She added to her income by spending her evenings at embroidery and she grew more deft since what she made had to be good enough to sell. She showed Dutilh some of her work, and he bought it from her with a kind of pitying gentleness that terrified her since it implied that his womanly intuition was still at work.

It happened that the whim of fashion had suddenly altered from clinging integuments to loose-waisted, wide-frilled fantasies of eccentric design, and that was to Maryla's advantage till autumn drifted into winter and December lapsed into January.

Shortly after the Christian New Year had been celebrated with pagan festival, Maryla found that the distance between her boarding house and the shop had grown immensely longer, and it was uphill both ways. Now-a-mornings she was exhausted when she reached the clothes-

conservatory, and it was such a task exchanging her street shoes for her slippers that she almost fell forward on her face.

One afternoon Mrs. Shenstone brought her a gown of more sedate maturity than Maryla usually exhibited. When she walked out in it, she found that Dutilh was paying unusual deference to a beautiful matron whose white hair was like graceful sarcasm. At her side was a very young man dressed with the swagger of a collegian. The woman seemed to like the gown Maryla marched in, but the young man growled:

"Ah, cut it out, Mater; that'll do for your coming-in party at the Old Ladies' Home, but I'm taking you to a dance, and you're going to be the kid sister of all the girls."

The woman frowned amiably: "Now Perry! don't flatter your old mother." And she smiled up to Dutilh: "My son is home on his first college vacation, and he insists on dragging me to a dance. He wouldn't let me buy anything at my usual shop. He said he'd stake me to something giddy."

"Your son is quite right," said Dutilh. "It makes me sick to see a young and beautiful *débutante* let herself be pushed into the chaperon class. Your son has his father's good taste. Is he still abroad, your husband—Mrs. Merithew?"

### III

MARYLA felt the floor see-sawing beneath her. She turned and made blindly for the dressing room. She heard Dutilh calling something to her, but she dared not pause to find out what it was. She ran to Mrs. Shenstone, maundering: "Get me out of this, get me out of this!"

She began to flap her hands and beat her breast as if she were suffocating. Mrs. Shenstone whipped the costume over her head and pushed her into a chair.

Dutilh followed close and was about to berate Maryla, when he saw her state of mind. The hysterical typhoons that swept his models without warning were a hazard of the trade. But they held one field where men could not be substituted.



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Needs no attention except to re-stock and remove money accumulated.

**STANDARD VENDING MACHINE CO.**

712 Markle Bank Bldg., Hazleton, Pa.



Dutilh expended on Mrs. Shenstone the vitriol he had prepared for Maryla.

"Put that Cubist gown on one of the other girls and hustle her out. And let Maryla alone. Can't you see she's sick?"

THE substitute was wrapped in a fantastic costume and hurried to the firing line. Mrs. Shenstone followed, and Maryla, abandoned to solitude, regained control of herself. But she sat still brooding over many things. The final horror of her plight was the discovery that Merithew had a wife and a grown son.

A little later, Dutilh poked his head in at the door, and he was almost shy in his manner when he spoke:

"You're on your feet too much, my child. You run along home and stay there till you get stronger."

"But money—I've got to make money!"

"I'll keep you busy at embroidery jobs, and you'll make just as much there as in the shop. Run along now and take care of yourself. If you need anything or any friends, let me know. And for God's sake don't blubber. Get out of here. I'm busy."

Maryla could not find words to express her gratitude and her contrition, but her eyes were glowing with thanks.

She went slowly back to her boarding house and managed by working almost from morning to morning to earn something more than her living expenses. Her savings she put away in a safe place against her coming need.

She had ample time to ponder the solemn consequences of her frivolous romance. She was honest enough to blame herself for her misfortune, more than the man. She felt that she was undergoing a righteous penance. She had done heinous wrong and had known it then. Half of the wild sweetness of her sin had been the sin of it. Jehovah was a just god; he was a shrewd collector, but he did not cheat.

But the man—where was he? What penalty was he paying? What penalty would ever be exacted from him?

She felt that Perry Merithew was a very miserable scoundrel. He had a beautiful wife and a fine son, yet he did

not keep good. She began to see why such light, handsome, amusing merry men as he were regarded with contempt and hostility by solemn men like her father. She began to feel that her father, hard-toiling, home-keeping sloven that he was, was a more beautiful soul than the exquisite Perry. She began to understand what ugly things result from the longing for pretty things.

She began to despise Merry Perry and from that to hate him—but deliberately, as always; her love ebbed out tardily, and her hatred replaced it tardily, but it was filling her soul. Her mood was no longer one of hurt pride, of cowering shame and meek repentance. It was an Israelitic mood of wrath against the snarer of her feet, of wrath against the coward who gave women sons and abandoned them.

She had helped herself through the first terrible hours of realization with a fantastic hope that when Perry Merithew returned from Europe, he would make haste to marry her out of love for her and for their child. And now she had been struck by the discovery, as by a lightning, that he could not help them if he would, since he had already a wife, he had already a son. He would protect them first.

This other and earlier obligation did not absolve Perry in her soul. It made her hate him with the wild-beast hatred a young female animal feels for the father of its young. Dire schemes of punishment began to occupy her thoughts. She sat alone in a little cold room embroidering flowers of thread upon meshes of thread, and crocheting snares for Merry Perry's feet to revenge the snares he had spread for hers.

By and by her landlady turned her out. In the black wrath of her shame as she lugged her belongings down the street, Maryla made one weary, half-insane resolve to find Perry and force him to provide for her or skewer his heart with the amethystine pin.

She left her baggage at a small bake-shop, while she went on this errand. But Perry had not yet come back from Europe, and she weakly accepted her doom as something arranged.

When she found other lodgings she



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Push-Button Control

Gives two forward, a neutral and two reverse speeds, by simply pressing a button. Magneto enclosed in fly-wheel. Dual ignition. Silencer on exhaust. Water-tight gear housing and six other exclusive features. Send for catalog. We also build marine motors from 2 to 30 h. p. Details on request.

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Each evening this royal sport exhilarates the grown-ups. It banishes brain-fag, care and fatigue.

And billiards safeguards boys—brings out their manly traits and makes home win them from the "corner gang!"

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You—*everyone*—can learn to play. And our free trial offer lets you sample the raptures of these grand old games at home. Then billiards will win the whole family as it is winning thousands everywhere.

### Playing Outfit FREE

Balls, Cues, Rack, Markers, Brush, Table Cover, Tips, Cue-Clamps, expert book on "How to Play," etc., included complete without extra cost.

Full details, easy terms, low factory prices and endorsements of parents and educators now given in our handsome book, "Billiards—The Home Magnet." Sent FREE postpaid. Mail the coupon while the edition lasts.

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(124)

gave out that she was the widow of an imaginary man recently run over by a street car. There are so many such widows that the story was accepted without inquiry.

MARYLA was persuaded by her new landlady to save danger and expense by entrusting herself to a maternity hospital where the benevolent city acted as Lucina with as much skill and precaution as a millionaire could have procured.

When she had passed through the ordeal and become a mother she was aghast to find that she did not feel an instant passion of love for the child. But she had hated its father and herself so much that there was no love for the baby's heritage.

It was a girl, and naturally not pretty at first, and naturally very noisy and exacting and selfish: and it kept very irregular hours.

In due time Maryla crept back to her boarding house with her new luggage. The baby proclaimed its arrival with a fanfare of uproar. It was its own brass band. It made itself a nuisance to the boarders, who needed sleep occasionally. A baby makes a large crowd in a hall bedroom, and it interfered with Maryla's ability to earn the very money itself required in such abundance.

Maryla had moods of pride and idolatry and frenzies of love, but even these told her that it was for the baby's own good that it should have better care than she could give it. When people begin to say that something is for someone's own good, a divorce is imminent.

A wealthy bachelor who was a floor-walker all day paid six dollars a week for the handsome double room next to the little hall bedroom where Maryla was a floorwalker half the night. And he told the landlady that he would have to change his lodgings since the small gramophone next door had ruined his sleep till he was forgetting which counter what was sold at. That very day he had sent an elderly customer to the top floor for an ice-pick though he knew well they had always been sold in the basement.

The landlady naturally sympathized with him—she being a widow and he a bachelor, and she told him she would see that he got his rest like what a busy man had got to get. She handed Maryla her passports.

Maryla gathered her belongings together once more and moved on, a new wicker suit-case hanging from one arm, the new baby seated on the other. She had started for a boarding house already so infested with infants that one more would not be noticed, but she paused to shift her burdens so that the arm flexed about the child and the arm almost pulled out of its socket by the suit-case might exchange pains.

Somehow her present plight seemed to foreshadow her whole future: she would flounder lower and lower in the world, with one arm full of freight and the other full of this baby that hated its life as much as she hated hers. She decided that the East River was the best place for both of them, or one of those pretty lakes she had seen in Central Park. She started that way, but paused again. Suddenly she remembered that she had heard a neighbor at the Maternity Hospital speak of the Basket of Sister Irene.

There was the solution of all her riddles! She stopped at a little lunch room and persuaded the owner to keep her suit-case till she returned for it. Then she turned north on Lexington Avenue to find that magic Irenean receptacle of intolerable burdens.

### CHAPTER XXXIII

AT Sixty-eighth Street Maryla found the home of Sister Irene's basket. An architect would have shuddered at the building, but to Maryla it was a beautiful city of refuge on a high hill of safety.

The immense institution that now fills a whole square had indeed grown out of the basket Sister Irene set outside her door in West Twelfth Street nearly fifty years ago. At that time good folk still clung to the horrible fallacy that the way to keep people from crime was to treat them cruelly after they had committed it. Sister Irene believed that she

## Send a 2¢ Stamp



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and you, too, will be delighted with the charming delicacy and delightful perfume of this purest of transparent toilet soaps. Rich creamy lather that makes using it a pleasure—a revelation of how perfect a toilet soap can be.

**No. 4711 White Rose Glycerine Soap**

Preferred today, as for generations, by women of perception and refinement. 15 cents per cake at your dry goods dealer or druggist.

To cover merely the cost of packing and postage send 2c stamp for trial sample cake or 10 cents for a trial package containing sample cake of No. 4711 White Rose Glycerine Soap, a sample of No. 4711 Bath Salts and a sample bottle of No. 4711 Eau de Cologne.

No. 4711 Liquid White Rose Glycerine Soap: A new, convenient, delightful form of this refreshing soap—sanitary, economical, efficient. A luxurious Shampoo.

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1927	\$50
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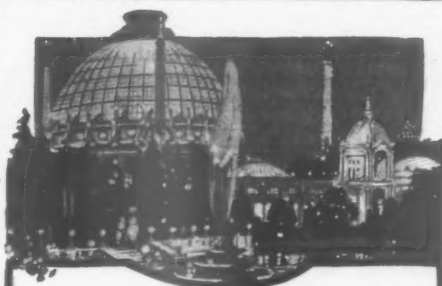
Start Right. Start Now. Buy a Diamond. Beats a Savings Bank four to one, besides daily dividends in pleasure while wearing it.

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Greatest Diamond values ever offered in \$25, \$50, \$75 and \$100 sizes. Pure white, perfectly cut, sent on approval, **no money down.**

**FREE CATALOG.** Write for it quick. Make your selection and when the diamond comes, if you like it and want to keep it, pay for it on our Liberal Club Plan—payments so easy, you'll never miss the money. No red tape, no security—just common honesty among men. Postal will do.

**HARRIS-GOAR CO.** Dept. 1573  
Kansas City, Mo.



## "Going West"

The words have assumed a new significance for the year 1915.

The annual vacation of thousands will be spent at the greatest of world Expositions, where the progress and achievements of the past decade are being shown.

## The California Expositions

Present a rare opportunity to inspect the accomplishments of more than forty nations.

Go via

## Northern Pacific Railway

And the Great Northern Pacific S. S. Co.

Over the "Scenic Highway" through some of the most wonderful scenery on the American continent coupled with a 600-mile ocean voyage.

"The Exposition Starts When You Board the Northern Pacific Train."

Stop Off at

## Yellowstone National Park

America's Only Geyserland and "Nature's Own World's Exposition," and view the majestic scenery and strange phenomena of Wonderland.

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might save a few unwilling mothers from thrusting their unwelcome intruders back into the Everywhere out of the Here *via* the rivers or the ash-barrels, if she provided a more fitting place for the tender bodies and a beginning instead of an ending to their lives.

The basket became so harrowingly popular an institution that a special building was erected and enlarged again and again; and the City of New York came to the aid of the Sisters of Charity. The great mother-hearted city which callow novelists and fireless poets love to rubber stamp "the modern Nineveh" and the "New Babylon," gave more and more of its funds to the Sisters till its usual annual dole had reached three hundred and sixty-eight thousand dollars. The baby that Maryla brought to its vine-fronded door was the sixty-one thousand two hundred and nineteenth child it had received on the mothers' own terms.

But by the time Maryla arrived, a change had taken place. The mystic fame of the basket had spread afar, and from all parts of the virtuous provinces and from overseas as well, a horde of veiled mothers had hastened to present the vicious metropolis with their children.

At last the basket was removed from the outer arch to the vestibule inside; not because the city and the Sisters wished to rob any desperate woman of the privilege of leaving her impossible baby there and departing unidentified, but because the first of industries, the manufacture of human milk, could not keep pace with the need. Even the big city could not provide breasts enough to feed the wards that would not prosper on the bottle. The multi-mammate Ephesian Diana herself would have faltered before the onsets of such a Lilliputian host.

When Maryla arrived she hesitated outside a while, then peered within and saw the little bassinet under its graceful canopy waiting in the hall. She stole in timorously and bent over the exquisite white wicker altar ribboned and canopied in white. She was just unloading her arms of the sacrifice when she was approached by a gentle woman in a

quaintly frilled glazed bonnet and a voluminous black robe. Maryla whirled on her like a caught thief, but she was kindly bespoken and invited to a conference.

Surges of shame encarnadined the girl's shivering flesh and she was fain to break free. But gentleness builds firmer barriers than steel and she listened perforce, not to commands or rebukes, but to pleas that she help the city to care for her baby and herself.

THE pale faced, white haired virgin who had never borne a child and yet mothered three thousand children every year knew more of motherhood than any mere mother could know, because she had known all the sorts of mothers, and multitudes of each of the sorts. Herself anonymous for the sake of charity, she aided these other anonymous ones. Knowing so much, she knew how little she knew, and was meek and inquisitive. She asked the questions that hurt least and helped most, and asked them with the timidity of wisdom.

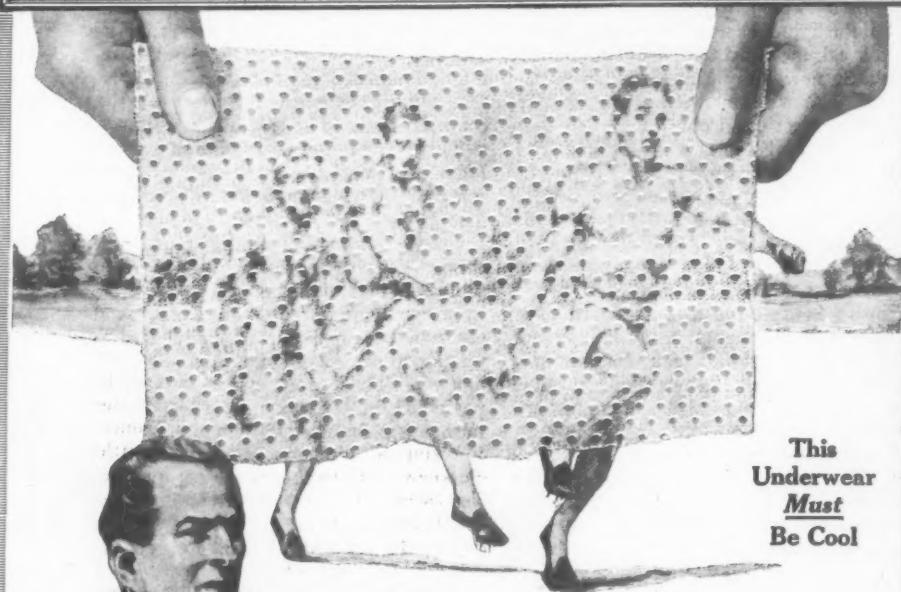
She beamed upon the baleful eyes of Maryla, and said: "My child, if you can't afford to take care of your baby—and such a pretty one it is! isn't it?—wont you stay here with it? Make this your home so that the little thing can have its mother's milk and its mother's love till it is strong enough to be left, or taken with you. Perhaps you could even help us by feeding some other little hungry child whose mother is dead or—or lacking in sustenance for her own."

Maryla was almost persuaded, but a gust of wildness flung her heart out of its course. She rebelled against immuring herself here as the nurse of Perry Merithew's child. Why should he go free among luxuries while she consigned herself to this prison? She shook her head in sullen refusal.

The Sister murmured a warning appeal:

"If you wont take care of your own, my dear, do you realize that you will have to give it up entirely?—to be nursed by some other woman? And by and by somebody will come along and adopt it for her own and give it another name?—some other woman whom God has not

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Must  
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Think how cool, light and open our Union Suits must be. Consider how comfortable for summer. As to durability? Unconditionally guaranteed.

Chalmers "Porosknit" cannot cling (sweaty, disagreeable, irksome) to the body. Instead, it keeps your body dry and gives you summer comfort in as near to nature's way as one may go.



*This Label on Every Garment*

For Men	Any Style	For Boys
50c	Shirts and Drawers	25c
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For Men	UNION SUITS	For Boys
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With Chalmers "Porosknit" Union Suits there can be no "short-waisted" feeling—no cutting in the crotch. Their Closed Crotch is comfortable, fits, stays put—cannot gape open nor bulge. You have full elasticity in the seat, so that the garment gives freely and easily with every turn or bend.

Yet please remember this: Chalmers "Porosknit" is *imitated* but NOT duplicated. Be sure to get the genuine. You'll know it by the label.

CHALMERS KNITTING CO., 35 Bridge St., Amsterdam, N. Y.

*Also Makers of Chalmers Spring Needle Ribbed Union Suits, Fall and Winter Weight*

*Write for Handsome Book  
of All Styles*



blessed with a baby as He has you? You wouldn't want that, would you?"

It is dangerous to ask a question that can be answered by a Yes or a No, for then the mind has but to toss a penny and speak the word that falls first on the lips. So now Maryla in a sudden ferocity of defiance, and with a reversion to earlier dialect cried out:

"Yes! It is jost what I want it! Thees bebbly is not my bebbly! I did not esk it! I did not chosse thees bebbly! It does not want me. All the time if cries—cries—cries! God did not sende me thees bebbly. I was bad and a man was bad and he goes away and bebbly comes. Better I go away too. If some other womans wants it to have thees bebbly, she should have it, but not me. I am bad. The bebbly's fadder, he is bad. You take thees bebbly and make a good girl from her. With me, she is sick. She dies or she grows up bad like me."

The Sister had met hundreds of women in just such a mood. Every day there was some Maryla here, in a strange tangle of selfishness, altruism, collapse, revolt, hysteria and cold logic. Often the frenzied creatures wrenched themselves free from their young as if they tore in two the invisible umbilical cord of tradition; only to find when they were free that their own hearts were bleeding themselves out through the wound. The next day or the next week or month, they crept back and begged to be re-employed at the mother-job in the vast dairy of life. She had such a hope of Maryla.

And so, without further debate, the Sister sent for one of the blank forms in which the great surrender of the individual to the community was so coldly and dreadfully legalized:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, mother of a \_\_\_\_\_ infant child aged \_\_\_\_\_, named \_\_\_\_\_, born at \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby surrender and entrust to The New York Foundling Hospital, for the period of life, the entire management and control of such child, and do hereby assign to and invest said Corporation with the same powers and control over said child, as those of which I am possessed.

Dated, New York, \_\_\_\_\_ 191 —

Witness \_\_\_\_\_

Maryla read it with vague understanding and shivered before its chill. Yet she was so distraught with her many shames that she welcomed this one more

And also there was a secret relief in escaping the solemn, endless duties of her motherhood. Like the wanton Christina she signed away the glory of the crown in order to be free of its weight.

There was some confusion about Maryla's name. When the Sister asked for that, Maryla answered: "Maryla—Maryla—" and hesitated. What was her name as a mother, Sokalska or Merithew? To give the former would be to smirch her father's honor; to give the latter would be to betray Merithew. And she could not make up her mind to dignify or to disgrace him so far. At least, not yet. That revenge was still to be perfected in her schemes. The Sister, mishearing the unusual name and thinking that the girl was of French extraction or wished to pretend to be, repeated and wrote, "Marie La—" and waited. At length she said:

"Marie La—what? La Forge? La Place? La Croix?"

Maryla chose the last: "Marie La Kvah," she said. The Sister smiled sadly. The choice of names grew difficult when it recurred by the thousand-fold. She accepted Maryla's *nom de mère*, and wrote in the spaces that the child was "female;" aged "two weeks," named "Marie" and "born at New York." And she dated it June 9, 1914. Then she invited Maryla to sign, and exchanged the pen for the baby. She pretended not to notice the surprise Maryla showed at the spelling of her own name, or the slow, palsied scrawl with which she copied it. After all, what is life but the signing of an assumed name to a form in which we may fill only a few blanks?

When the supreme abdication was signed, the Sister took the pen to witness the signature. Maryla offered to relieve her of the child while she wrote, but the Sister shook her head and smiled and said, "No, no, the baby belongs to us now."

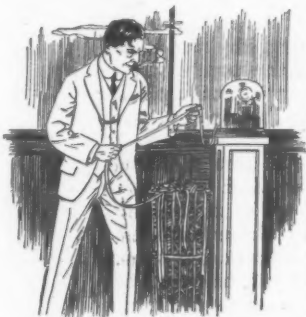
This crucial test almost broke Maryla's resolution as the sly saint hoped it would. It had melted other fierce souls,



# The Fear Of A Nervous Breakdown

The fierce demands of 20th Century requirements all tend to exhaust the nervous forces—to break down the resistance.

It is not excessive effort that saps the vitality. It is the suspense—the constant feeling of being “always on guard”—the fear of relaxing that wears the nerves to shreds.



Soon the power to relax at all departs—just as insomnia creeps on after a long vigil.

Then soon, the duties themselves become arduous—and that is the point at which the complications

begin to “pyramid”. The nervous condition disorganizes the digestive functions—and the toboggan slide is reached. Each condition serves to augment the other.

It is time to intervene—with judgment.

## A Nerve and Tissue Food is Needed

Nerve exhaustion means that the tissues have been depleted of their rightful share of assimilating power. And this is bad, because then the outraged nerves begin the formation of the “vicious circle”—they harass the whole organism—which in turn, militates against the nerves again. Matters rapidly become worse—non-assimilation robbing the nerves and the raging nerves preventing assimilation.

The nerves must be quieted—in the proper manner—by feeding them in a speedy



manner—with an easily-absorbed food that can readily be utilized. They require lecithin, a nitrogenous constituent of brain and nerves—and with which these parts must be supplied. One of the most easily available forms of this invaluable nerve-center requisite is given us in the lupulin of the hop.

And the hop possesses another admirable property. It is a direct tonic. It stimulates the digestive fluids. It prepares the way for a proper reception of tissue nourishment.

If we combine with the hops the nutrient known as malt we have a truly balanced tonic-and-tissue-building-food combined. One sets up the needed demand and the other satisfies it in the most efficient way.



## Pabst Extract Fulfills Every Possible Requirement

Pabst Extract, The “Best” Tonic, possesses these properties in proper proportions. It is choicest hops and barley fortified with calcium hypophosphite and iron pyrophosphate. It is the one perfect tonic and nerve food. Pabst Extract bears the endorsement of physicians—it is specifically classified by the United States Government as a medical preparation and not a beverage—so, it is well to insist upon Pabst Extract, The “Best” Tonic.

## Pabst Extract Sold by Good Druggists Everywhere

Try a Dozen Bottles today. One bottle will not repair the ravages of months—possibly years. Be just—and give this incomparable tonic-food as fair a trial as you would some commercial or household appliance. Take a wineglassful before meals and on retiring—do this for a period of two weeks. Then see how you will eat and sleep.



We will send you an interesting free booklet upon Pabst Extract if you will ask for it.

**Pabst Extract Co., Milwaukee, Wis.**

and Maryla's eyes blazed with jealousy and with alarm at the response the fickle child made to the stranger's caress; and with scorn of the Sister's unfruitful spinsterhood. Maryla's bosom and her loins were wrung with longing to recall their own.

But she struck her hand across her eyes to shut out the angelic temptation and, turning, ran away.

## II

THE Sister's guess was true. Having given up her child, Maryla became the prey of the vultures of remorse. She wept, put out her arms, resolved to go back and rescue the child or shut herself in with it. But she thought also of the folly of forcing her head into the heavy yoke she had escaped. She thought of the hardships the child must undergo; the lifelong shame she would fasten on it if she kept it by her.

She fought the decision out alone, as people fight out everything. Her soul digested this problem as her body digested its food, resisting and overcoming the poisons it contained, gaining strength from the battle. Maryla did not kill herself, or die of grief or shame. She did not sink into a life of evil.

But the need of money drove her to action. She returned to Dutilh's and said:

"I am well now. I should be glad to work once more by your shop."

There was a ferocity now in her beauty in place of the old meekness, and Dutilh made no difficulty about taking her into the fold again. In fact, he took her in although he had discharged other girls: the dull season was beginning for him, and he was soon to go abroad to ransack the foreign fashions.

He fled again from Maryla's efforts to explain. He was afraid to hear either her truth or her lies. His business was designing and selling beautiful clothes to make women more beautiful or less homely. He avoided as best he could the ugly thoughts and the facts that do not drape life gracefully. He told Maryla to "shut up and get busy."

The days were filled with grace and color and the light chatter of people who

did not know Maryla's tragedy. But the evenings and the nights were crucifixions. She beat her aching heart and cried for her baby and for a home to keep it in. But her mornings took her to her work and not to the home of the foundlings.

And at Dutilh's Muriel Schuyler found her, when she came back at last from Europe.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

MURIEL had not meant to stay away so long, but fear of the New York newspapers and of the police kept her abroad till the spell of Europe regained control over her. As a girl she had gone to school in France, and foreign friends and relatives of hers had been sown broadcast about Europe by international marriages. She was beckoned from château to castle and from Schloss to palazzo, with various hotels between. She received more or less unwelcome tuition in the flirtation customs of various nations, and she heard the words *beautiful, cruel, adoration, mercy and marriage* in several languages. She laughed at them all more or less sincerely, and liked the men all more or less polyandrously, never dreaming that within a year most of them would be crouching in battle trenches, or fighting in the clouds or under the sea, or writhing in military hospitals or buried in a lonely ditch; and that Perry Merithew would be dead in New York.

She traversed the Europe that will never be again. She dallied in Rheims and in Louvain and Liège. Officers of every uniform attempted flirtations with her. They had little to excite them except their studies for the war that was ridiculously improbable. They expected war no more than the civilians who would also soon be uniforming by the million.

Muriel had qualms of conscience for the neglected children of her own country, and she vowed that she would take every next steamer that was sailing westward. But she was young, and the selection of a mate was inevitably her chief industry. And she could always

Many a business "clean-up"  
Has been made  
Over a pipeful of LUCKY STRIKE.  
Better keep a humidior of it  
Handy in your office.  
Good for the Boss—good for the men—  
Keeps 'em all clear-headed and  
In good humor.

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ROLL CUT TOBACCO

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The new Roll Cut crumbles just right for a perfect "draw."

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find some excuse before her own accusatory self by blaming her father and mother.

Muriel read in the Paris *Herald* and in the belated American papers of the bitter winter New York was experiencing, and how the unemployed and the unsheltered myriads suffered; how even the Municipal Lodging House could not provide for the doleful flocks harried in by the wolfish night winds. She begged to go home to their aid, but her mother refused to cross the ocean in mid-winter, and her father most tyrannically forbade Muriel to go over alone—for fear she might not be alone. They sent subscriptions, and instructions to Mr. Chivot to relax the purse strings, but that was not the same. Besides, the richest were feeling poor, since the hard times kept reducing the value of securities, and dividends were being cut down or passed with appalling unanimity. So Muriel did what we all do: she felt awfully sorry for those who were poorer than she was and said that she knew how they must feel since she felt so poor herself. And she squandered a good deal of money in the effort to throw off her gloom for the lack of it.

Perry Merithew had bobbed up shortly after her arrival in Europe and had expressed a somewhat overdone surprise and a somewhat overstrained delight at happening upon the Schuylers in the lobby of the Opéra.

Mrs. Schuyler spoiled his evening by saying, "How are you, Perry? And how is your darling wife? and is she with you? And your dear boy?"

Perry made the best of it and said that his boy was playing hard at college and his wife would join him shortly.

This reassured Mrs. Schuyler and she permitted Perry to be handy man about the town. He paid violent court to Mrs. Schuyler, and seemed to leave Muriel so much in the lurch that she gave him a good deal of attention when she could.

She made one or two excursions with Perry to places where a careful young girl does not take her innocent old mother. But she was in small danger from the dangerous Perry because he revered her with a solemnity he had

not dreamed himself capable of. He was rather proud of himself.

The fantastic mushroom notion of making Muriel his wife flourished in the sub-cellar of his soul. He determined that as soon as the present wearer of his "Mrs." arrived abroad he would broach the subject of a divorce. Mrs. Perry came; he broached it; and she declined it. She asked him who his new fancy was, and she suspected everybody but Muriel. He vowed that he would force her to free him but she laughed back the discouraging statement that if she had stood as much as she had stood all these years, she would manage to stand still more if he could manage to achieve it.

Mrs. Merithew was determined to keep up the "home" for their boy's sake, though a cynical mind might have wondered what the word home could represent with the father always away and always unfaithful, and the mother indifferent.

When Perry sought to escape from his wife back to Muriel's environment, he found that both Muriel and her mother insisted on including Mrs. Merithew in all their invitations, which she persisted in accepting.

The difficulties of courting the future Mrs. Merithew under the lorgnon of the present Mrs. Merithew were too severe even for Perry's advanced technic, and he gave up trying.

Just in time, the neglected Aphra Shaler arrived abroad with an enormously wealthy and ignorant copper-crat who blatantly criticised the "frog-eating Frenchies," ridiculed the "Boy de Bologna," found the bullyvards tame, and generally disgraced America by the things he found fault with in France. He was so tiresome and crass that even Aphra was ashamed to be seen—and heard—with him, and Perry found a melancholy amusement in taking her away from his bewildered compatriot.

Mrs. Merithew went back to America to spend the Christmas vacation with her son; but by that time Perry had lost track of Muriel and lost patience with Aphra. He sought distraction in Monte Carlo and in Tangiers, but a longing to settle down was rending him to a frenzy.



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In the spring he went back to Paris, bent on desperate courtship: but he found that Muriel had gone to Carlsbad. Perry hated Carlsbad but he followed her thither, and stomached the waters in order to quaff the nectar of Muriel's presence.

He spent hours of promenade with Jacob and with Susan for the sake of being near Muriel. She made no bones of leaving him stranded with her parents when younger suitors proffered more congenial entertainment. All in all, Perry's cup of life tasted just like the Sprudel water he imbibed, insipid, lukewarm, acrid.

The improvement the water he drank worked in his liver was lost in the aggravated distress of his spleen, and at length he pronounced himself cured and fled.

## II

MURIEL'S mother planned to spend the season of June and July in London, but Muriel issued a declaration of independence and secession. She had had enough of Europe for the time being, and she declared that she would not miss the international polo games at Meadowbrook for all the world.

She loved polo and had played the game herself on Long Island with impetuous horsemanship, though her malletry was irregular and she had raised welts on several skulls masculine and feminine. Winnie Nicolls would carry to his grave the scar of a clip she gave him over the eye, but he insisted that his heart was deeper bruised by her careless beauty.

Winnie Nicolls was a candidate for the position of Number Three on the American team. He wrote Muriel that he hadn't a chance of making it unless everybody else was knocked senseless, but she did not read that part of his letter to her mother. The mere hint of a desire on Muriel's part for a glimpse of Winnie Nicolls was enough to send her mother scurrying back to America. She felt that if she could see Muriel wed to so nice a boy with a fortune so supreme, she could fold her hands and grow old comfortably.

But Winnie Nicolls' skill as a polo

pusher and his gifts with a whippy stick were the least of the attractions America held forth to Muriel. Her emotions were a ragoût of homesickness, patriotism, recrudescence of conscience, European ennui, and curiosity as to the true sentimental condition of Doctor Clinton Worthing.

They still exchanged occasional letters but the intervals between had lengthened and the tone had grown more and more formal. Their first correspondence had been fervid and lengthy, and fire had been played with perilously. The long crossing on the yacht had given her time to write him almost every day, and from the first port they touched she had sent him a mass of pages that was a trifle small for a volume, but ponderous for a letter.

The letter glowed with a distinct feeling that all of the poor of New York were her immediate children and that Doctor Worthing was their spiritual father and actual guardian till she returned. But the rich of Europe eclipsed the distant pauperdom, and by the time Doctor Worthing had received her letter and his answer had reached her, she had pretty well forgotten exactly what she had said. Also she seemed to feel that his answer lacked the ebullience of her effusion.

And that was true. In Muriel's presence Worthing was another man. She had come at him out of the dark like an automobile at night, the look in her eyes blinding him like a pair of headlights. He did not know how to steer his own heart except straight into the light.

Muriel's presence ennobled him, made him her peer, more than that, a wonderful man of whose knowledge she was in awe. But when she was in mid-ocean on her father's yacht, she was another person and he was a poor young man toppling on the edge of falling in love with a very wealthy young woman.

A rich young man in love with a poor young woman has always been a romantic and noble person in any literature. But, in America at least, the other way about leaves the young man ridiculous and ignoble. Suppose he made conquest of Muriel and became her husband, what would he be on that yacht but a poor relation by marriage? His salary for a



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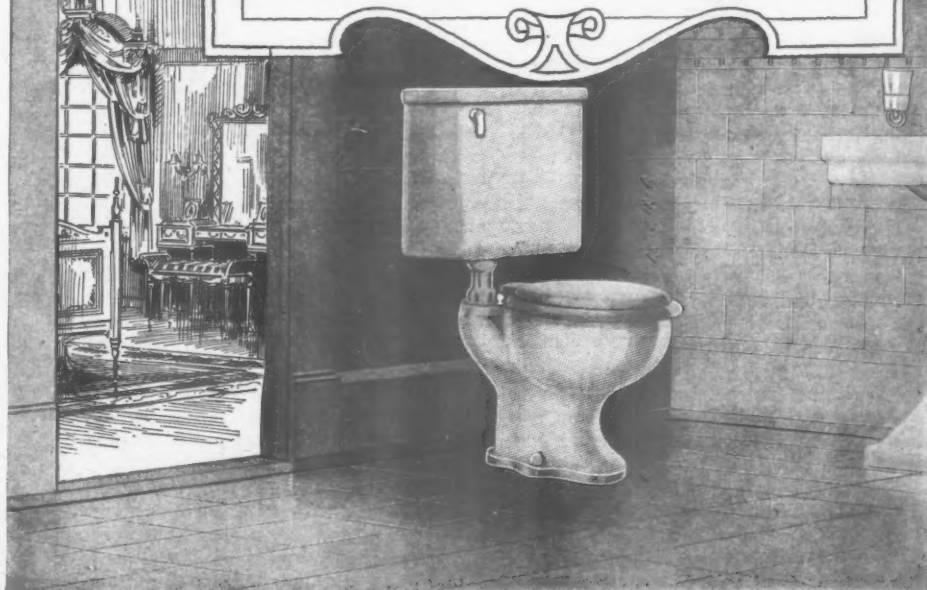
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year would not pay to keep the yacht in commission for a week.

Doctor Worthing did not believe in vermiform appendices. He cut them off when he had the slightest excuse. He would not care to be the vermiform appendix of the richest family on earth. He would not encourage any inflammation in his own heart.

When he received Muriel's first letter it had thrown him into a fever of longing, but he refrained from answering it till cold reason had assuaged his temperature. Then he wrote amiably, with an unintentional effect of condescension. Muriel, finding her first rhapsody answered long after she had written other rhapsodies, felt the aloofness of his manner and resented it. Her next letter showed that feeling. It reached him in time to allay the fever her previous letters had wrought him to again. His answer to that was one of iciclic phrasing.

Besides, correspondence across the ocean is one long anachronism at best, since the letter that arrives is never in answer to the last one sent, or never finds one in the same mood.

Muriel had learned that the Balinskys had been rescued from deportation at the President's direct order. In fact, the President had answered Muriel's letter to him in much the same spirit and had won from her the final praise that he was "an awfully nice man."

Worthing wrote that he had put the girl Rachel into an institution where she was having the best of care. He wrote her that Happy Hanigan's operation had not been the success expected and his recuperation had not been ideal. A further operation was required, since the poverty of the boy's parents, his poor food and his hardships and the delay in submitting to surgery had all worked against him: but that he was now enjoying all the resources of science.

Worthing, indeed, had left his place as interne at Bellevue for a post on the staff of Doctor Eccleston, who had made him his assistant and opened up to him a suddenly enlarged career.

This promotion had thrown Worthing into another love relapse, but he had recovered. His earnings had doubled indeed, and yet twice two is not much

more in the presence of a thousand than once two was in the first place. He realized this in time to keep from cabling Muriel a proposal of marriage.

Muriel had written a tear-stained letter over Happy Hanigan's delayed miracle, and she had written a sun-shot letter over Worthing's success, but he was busy at his solemn tasks and she at her trade of pastime, and Worthing told himself that he had lived down his folly.

But so the tree said as the winter came on and it shook off its foolish leaves and faced the wintry blasts under bare poles. And yet when summer came again it found the old foolishness returning in the guise of all wisdom, and it put on new leaves and blazed with green bravery.

### III

IT was thus with Worthing when he received a letter from Muriel. It was posted in New York, and it said:

Dear CLINTON WORTHING:

I've just got home, and I'm dying to see you and talk over old times. Do come up and have tea, wont you? Thank you so much! At five to-morrow, then!

Yours hastily,  
MURIEL S.

She had written "Schuyler" in full, then crossed all of it out but the initial. She had drawn her pen through that once! The young man felt the letter as warm in his hands as if it were the first robin with a live coal in the rusty tongs of its wings. He trembled as if he were but a sapling in a spring gale, and what else was he?

The next day he dressed him in his best, and he approached the Schuyler home with all trepidation. He was afraid of the street, he was afraid of the entrance, he was afraid of the steps and of the doorbell. He had been there once before, nearly a year ago, to one of her tea-parties. The hostess had stayed away and the guest had not got in.

But he was not turned away this time. Muriel had been watching for him from a window whose famous carvings were starred in the Baedeker of the United States. She did not wait to have his



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card brought to her; he had hardly surrendered his hat when he heard the patter of her feet on the vast marble stairway.

She paused a moment, poised as if for flight, then came running down with both hands outstretched. It was to him as if the Winged Victory of Samothrace had come to life and hurried down the steps of the Louvre. Muriel lacked the wings, but the head and arms were a more than fair exchange.

The eagerness of her welcome and the gust of her approach unsteadied him, and when they sat taking tea in the library, he did not know what he was drinking unless it were ambrosia.

His love came back to him in one swift rush from April to June, and though he was there in a palace talking to a princess he felt himself emperor enough to claim her as his own. And she helped his folly by resuming that meek sit-at-his-feet attitude of hers, a curious mixture of impudence and homage.

She asked questions so rapidly that his reply often put his spoon or his cup from his lips before he sipped. He was drinking from her eyes and pledging with his, however, and he needed no other beverage.

The upshot of her chatter was that they were to resume at once their combined attack on the misery of New York; and before the summer was over they were to heal all the sick, straighten all the crooked, reunite all the parted, and enrich all the poor.

They were just beginning on the details when Winnie Nicolls arrived, and turned Worthing's nectar to gall. The men recognized each other as partners in the wild and vain pursuit of Muriel. It looked as if they had undertaken another pursuit.

Nicolls had his car outside and he had come to take Muriel out to Piping Rock for dinner. He offered to drop Worthing wherever he wished to be dropped. Worthing did not wish to be dropped anywhere, so he retired, murmuring something about other engagements.

Muriel went to the door with him and for an *au-revoir* asked him to go to the first polo game in the Schuyler car and sit in the family box. He accepted with

rapture, till he learned that he might have the privilege of watching Nicolls play. And then he was afraid again. He knew that the best place to woo a woman is not in the grandstand at her side but on the field of action before her.

#### IV

THE polo game drew together some thirty thousand or more spectators, and such a number of necessity includes all sorts and conditions of people. Everybody was there that was anybody or nobody or betwixt and between.

Even Red Ida Ganley was there. She had soon lived up the money she had wheedled from Perry Merithew. His exit to Europe had cut off that supply and she had spent a lean winter among the penurious cabarets of Jersey City, Newark and Passaic.

Through the underground channels of her world she had learned that Shang Ganley had been discharged from prison for lack of evidence against him in the affair of the attempted kidnaping of Muriel Schuyler. Ida had heard that he had come forth breathing threats to get her and put her away if he croaked for it. She led a hunted life, watching every newcomer at every table, wondering if he might prove to be her fond assassin. The strain had been severe because she did not want to die.

At length she was inspired to a great plan. She managed to get in touch with Achilles Papademetrokopoulos, against whom also the ban had been raised. She told "Kill Papa" that she had a grand hunch. She had dreamed it, so it must be true. If Shang would let bygones remain so, she would put him in the way of a soft thing and he could pull down a coupla thousand bucks without half trying. She implied that she was an intimate friend of a dead swell guy with a wad of cash. If Shang would listen to reason, she would get this guy on the string and lead him into a little trap where Shang could spring the good old badger game on him and get all he had.

Achilles found Shang in such a state of poverty and hence of loneliness that even his wife's company was desirable. The very mention of money was an



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atonement and reconciliation. He had missed Ida sadly, particularly of Saturday nights when she had brought in her wages.

So Ida resumed her place as his helpmeet and help-drink. When she looked for Perry, however (he was to play the star part in her little drama), she found him still missing, still skulking in Europe.

Shang was furious at Ida's failure to make good, and he took her for the grand tour around the room.

As Mélisande's husband disciplined her, Shang dug his hands in Ida's copper hair and gave the floor a much-needed mopping. But unlike Mélisande, Ida did not wail, "He loves me no more; I am not happy." Ida said: "Fer Gawd's sake leave me wool enough to do me woik in. How'm I goin' to oin any dough in a cabaret if I'm baldheaded?"

This appealed to Shang's intelligence: he flung back in her face such tufts of hair as he found in his hands, and told her to get busy and bring home the bacon or he'd slice up her heart and give it to the cat.

Ida rearranged what he had left of her hair, visited a corrector of black eyes, and returned to her art, working industriously at song and dance and the side-lines of her trade. And she kept her husband in the luxury he was accustomed to, against the great day of Perry Merithew's home-coming.

And now when she sang she watched the incomers no longer in dread lest it be Shang, but in hope that it might be Perry. She had no better luck, however, than the *Lady of Shalott*.

THE polo game offered an opportunity that no pickpocket of proper regard for business openings could let slip unless the police issued him a personal invitation to stay away. Shang escaped this distinction and he was among those present.

He took Ida along for various reasons. In the first place, she paid for the tickets; in the second, she was an adept dip herself; in the third, she would be useful as a recipient of what he might snatch; and in the fourth, he believed that an indulgent husband should occasionally

grant his wife a bit of recreation—not enough to spoil her, but enough to give him something to refer to in quarrel-time as a proof of his generosity and her ingratitude.

Shang and Ida reached Westbury by the Long Island railroad under the river. The trains were sardined with people. The roads were almost choked with automobiles, as numberless as microbes in the veins of a typhoid patient.

But there was an enforced democracy about the multitude. The most expensive cars had to be parked at a distance from the enclosure, and great folk as well as small must trudge through the dusty grass to the turnstiles.

Shang and Ida were among the box-holders. They bought theirs of a noisy person who sold according to height and reliability: soap boxes of solid structure naturally brought more than collapsible biscuit tins. Shang was in a hang-the-expense-it's-my-wife's-money mood; he purchased a handsome tomato box which was the envy of all the neighbors.

From this vantage point they watched the throng flow past: rich man, poor man, merchant, chief, all the world and its women. Suddenly Ida's nails nipped Shang's arm: "Look! there's Muriel Schuyler comin'. Who's the guy with her?"

"It's de guy we scraped off against de L pillar. Don't leave 'em lamp us."

Shang and Ida turned and pressed their faces against the wire barrier till Muriel and her family had passed. If Muriel had recognized them she would have been more frightened than they.

Close on the heels of Muriel and Worthing came Perry Merithew, hastening to get a word with Muriel, but constantly impeded by the crowd. Him also Ida saw. She nudged Shang:

"Dat's me man. Dat's Purry Murri-t'ew."

"De guy you was goin' to badger?"

"Uh-huh."

"Well, go to it!"

"Not here."

"Here an' now! Never put off to to-morra de guy yous kin do tuh-day." He emphasized the proverb by bunting her off the box, almost upon Perry's toes. Ida drawled: "I beg your pah-donn!"



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When Perry ignored her, she said in her most refined manner: "Sa-ay, it's a winner you wouldn't speak to a fella."

Perry was just wincing before the realization that Pet Bettany was ahead of him and waiting for him with her mother. He paused to be rid of Ida, whom he had recognized at the second stare.

"Oh, how are you! I haven't seen you for ever so long. Fine day, isn't it? Glad to have seen you."

He was moving on, when she checked him:

"Sa-ay, where'd you get the idea I can live on lovely weather? I gotta have a little talk with you."

Seeing him resent the threatening tone, she shifted to a whine: "It's not a hold-up: it's sumpum you got a right to be tipped off to. I done you a good toin oncet, and one good toin desoives another."

"Again?" he sighed. "Well, telephone me at—no, drop me a line at my club and I'll be delighted to call. Good-by."

He got away without naming the club, but she knew that she could find him.

Ida returned to her spouse with the good news that she had Perry on the hook, and Shang was so overjoyed, so full of dreams of wealth, that he spared the pocketbooks of his fellow spectators. But he did not spare the American team, a great-hearted quartet of famous achievement but suffering an off-day and an off-year—which is for the good of the sport, but not for the approval of the sports.

Shang Ganley, however, like thousands of other good Americans who had never seen a polo game before, felt personally affronted by every bit of bad luck, by every bad guess, and he yelled through the wire criticisms that made up in virulence for what they lacked in information.

It was baseball on horseback to Shang, and he was as typically bloodthirsty as any fan at the old Polo Grounds where polo is never played.

The people in the more exclusive enclosures were no less excited. Muriel was frantic. She had Worthing's arm black and blue from clutching him in the tense moments following a throw-in or

some neck-and-neck race down the fields with mallets like antennae.

When an American hooked out a ball from a mêlée and fed it to a compatriot and he to another and he swung it in a white rainbow of hope to the goal-posts, she pounded her father's shoulders raw and hugged and kissed her mother.

When one of the diabolically ubiquitous Englishmen turned up in the wrong place and with a back-handed scoop sent the ball back through the shutting legs of the joyous ponies, then she mourned as for some ineffable and irretrievable loss. If the liberty of the nation had been involved, she could hardly have felt the struggle more crucial.

Between chukkers there was some visiting. The Schuyler box was in the front row, and Winnie Nicolls, who was in uniform as a substitute, kept leaning on the rail to deplore the rotten luck.

Mrs. Schuyler tried to please him and to interest Muriel, when she said: "If you were only there in place of What's-his-name, Winnie, we might do better."

"The Lord forbid!" said Winnie with complete modesty.

## V

PERRY haunted the Schuyler vicinage.

He loved Muriel in her open-air mood, and she offered much contrast with the others of his fancy. They seemed to haunt him.

He saw Maryla in one of the slow-moving columns. Her eyes burned upon him with a fierceness that he could not translate, whether it were love or loathing. But he decided it could not be she. Her copper hair was hidden under a splendid and expensive hat, and her costume was prematurely fashionable. He did not know that she had gone back to Dutilh's or that Dutilh sent out his models to such events in his best wares, exquisite sandwich-women without placards.

While he was loitering about the Schuyler box, Aphra Shaler sauntered past with an elderly innocent in tow. She glared at him with unmitigated hatred, and her girlish lips spat at him a whispered curse that amused him immensely.



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Pet Bettany had waylaid him too. She had seen him talking with Red Ida and she was full of cynical questions, which he evaded by a quick comment:

"What in God's name have you done to your hair? You've painted it, haven't you?"

"Yes," she said.

"Why? You belong among the brunettes. I don't like you in copper."

"You don't like me anyway. But you like your little Muriel in copper, and so does Winnie Nicolls."

"Oh, that's the way the wind sets. Well, good hunting, Sister!"

"And by the way, old thing, I want another confab with you. You can lunch with me next Monday at the Ritz; it's your treat."

"I'll be out of town."

"Better not be, old duck."

"Oh Lord! All right. I'm sorry I came home."

Pet was desperate. She even visited the Schuyler box, where she was not welcome, because she could not otherwise get near to Winnie Nicolls. She saw the idolatry in Perry Merithew's eyes as he kept them on Muriel. Everybody saw it but Muriel. Even Aphra Shaler, sauntering past unobserved, saw it, and writhed with jealousy. She sauntered by again and mumbled hastily: "I'll telephone you to-morrow at eleven. Be home!"

Perry laughed uncomfortably and said to himself: "I've opened a bally book-ing-office."

Muriel had no knowledge of the intrigues going on about her. All that was important to her was that her beloved nation was losing an historic battle.

Toward the last of the game, when it was evident that the brave rally of the

American team was likely to be in vain, Muriel groaned:

"It's a bad year for our poor old country. They've taken our polo-cup, and our tennis-cup and the golf-cup. We've only got the *America's* cup, and the fourth *Shamrock* is after that."

"And I'll bet she carries it back," said Perry.

Winnie Nicolls had been one of a syndicate to build a defender of the venerable old beaker. He said: "I'll take that bet for any sum you want to lay."

"You're on," Perry laughed. "I'll go you a thousand. It's the only thing I can do for my country, because I always lose."

He neither lost nor won that bet, for the undreamed-of Servian-Austrian-German-Russian-Belgian-French-English-Turkish war sent the yacht race agley along with countless other human schemes. Perry Merithew would not have been there anyway, because before there was any world-war, a private war of his own had left him dead on the inglorious battlefield of a slum roof, with eight little tufts of copper-colored hair in his clutch.

That hair at present was under the hat of one of the women at the game. Her only excitement now was in the two rival riders galloping like Siamese twins on Siamese steeds, both yearning forward in frenzied emulation for the tiny, dusty willow planet that scudded eagerly across the green in perfect obedience to whichever mallet smote it last. It might have been the white soul of a woman who meant well, but went where the whacks of destiny shot her, among the hoofs of the ponies of the gods playing polo.

**The next installment of "Empty Pockets," in which we learn which of the five copper-haired women it was who accompanied Merry Perry to the tenement roof that night, will be in the May issue of The Red Book Magazine, on the news-stands April 23rd.**

